YOUTH IN HELL

BOOKS BY ALBERT BEIN

LOVE IN CHICAGO
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To the admirable woman who befriended me while I was in a Reform School, opened the gates for me, and tried hard to guide my bewildered boyhood into manhood.

Why do I relate these abominations? So that you may know, kind sirs, that it is not all past and done with! You have a liking for grim fantasies; you are delighted with horrible stories well told; the grotesquely terrible excites you pleasantly. But I know of genuine horrors, every day terrors, and I have an undeniable right to excite you unpleasantly, by telling you about them, in order that you may remember how we live, and under what circumstances. A low and unclean life it is, ours, and that is the truth.

I am a lover of humanity and I have no desire to make anyone miserable, but one must not be sentimental, nor hide the grim truth with the motley words of beautiful lies. Let us face life as it is! All that is good and human in our hearts and brains needs renewing.

GORKY

Where truant 'prentices, yet young in sin,
Blush at the curious stranger peeping in.

BURNS

NOTE

The names of the characters in this book are fictitious but the events related are true.

YOUTH IN HELL

1

The cumbersome old-model cab jogged its way along the rocky country road. It was so dark we could not see the driver before us.

" Well, Sheeney, if nothin' happens, we ought to be there now in less'n fifteen minutes."

My heart bounded once more and I fervently hoped that something would happen; that God'd either press a button releasing a streak of lightning to split me asunder from this giant of a fat man who insisted on calling me ' Sheeney,' or charge the black night to set about dissolving me.

No sooner had I relaxed in my corner again, than the glinting-eyed Deputy asprawl beside me, in a broad-brimmed Stetson and Radiolite wrist-watch, jerked the chain of the steel cuff that was clamped on my left wrist.

" Sheeney, you know you're 'bout the size of a cheese-mite? "

I gritted my teeth and he jerked slightly again as though he was an organ grinder and I his monkey.

"Ouch! Mister! what the hell do you think I am, anyway!"

"Never you mind, now, Sheeney! Never you mind, I say. . . . Don't get funny. . . . You know what'll happen. . . . Ten more minutes."

He'd started interspersing the last half-hour's ride from the Capital with these five-minute announcements. I knew he was anxious to have me off his hands and get the credit for it because all along the journey he'd been talking big about never losing a boy, and he'd had foxier ones than me to contend with. But I wished the ride would never end for I'd heard a great deal about the severity of the institution I was being taken to, and it loomed alarmingly in my imagination.

"Sheeney, only five more minutes left, an' you know I'm not the kind as takes chances."

He pressed me against the side of the cab with his enormous body. I felt as though a mountain had slid over on me. He was breathing heavily and the odour of his breath and flabby flesh made me beat a tattoo on his side and gasp:

"Hey, Mister, for crysake quit squeezing out my stuffings and leave me get some air."

He withdrew his mountainous body about an inch.

"All right, Sheeney, but don't you dare try anything now. . . . I ain't aimin' to be made a fool out of at the very last minute, you know."

I took a deep breath and sighed. Occasionally we passed a lamp-lit farm-house. Nothing else was visible.

"Sheeney, you've started out travellin' on Reformatory Road now, an' you'll find it's a mighty short cut to Penitentiary Avenoo. I ain't tryin' to discourage you or nothin' like that, but it's a one-way road without any branches an' you've got to take it clear to the end."

His low, raucous voice sounded like an oracle in the closed cab. I felt inclined to break my sullen silence by asking him why, if that were the case, they didn't sentence me to the Penitentiary in the first place and have it over with. But he added as if he read my thoughts:

"If I were 'pointed maker of America's laws that's where all you thievin' kids'd go without any bystops. It's only a waste of time an' good money to experiment any more after the first offense. The sob sisters an' their brothers may believe that

planted crime seeds can be dug out of you while you're still young an' pliable — but I know better! Ha! I never saw a case yet where planted crime seeds didn't take root an' bloom."

"Mister," I answered in anger, "you wanna know something: you're a great big liar!"

Sure he was a great big liar, and because I knew it, his terrible words had no effect on me. All detectives and juvenile officers and sheriffs and policemen were great big liars! Hadn't I seen them time and again place their broad hands on the Holy Bible and swear black lies against me and other boys right before the stern-faced God-like judge!

"Shee-ney!" he hissed in his hoarse voice, the emphasized first syllable sounding in the rolling cab like the swishing of waves, "I've been tryin' to act like a white man toward you an' I see that it can't be done. What's needed to draw out all that smartness is twenty or thirty good lashes with a strap; and if I thought it'd do any good, I'd recommend you for 'em right off the bat to Sup'rintendent Arnold!"

I resented his words but was afraid to retaliate. There was an ominous silence in which I heard him

grind his teeth and growl behind them. I covered my head with my free arm to ward off any forthcoming blows: once before, in the county jail, he had struck me for calling him a bad name in exchange for 'Sheeney' and the memory of it made my ears ring. . . . The cab suddenly swerved and climbed . . . then as suddenly, stopped.

The door was opened by the skinny driver in a heavy red beard and a leather pea-jacket, who greeted us in a gay, shrill voice that made my heart beat fast:

"Refo'm school! You-all better be keerful steppin' down, now. The night's blacker'n a blind nigger walkin' through a tunnel."

The corpulent Deputy yanked my wrist and sent me sprawling over his feet in pain. "Get out, Sheeney, you're damn lucky we're here."

I arose protesting.

"Shet up! 'r I'll fetch you somethin' you'll remember me by for the rest of your life, an' I don't give a damn if Mr. Arnold does see me bringin' you in bawlin'!"

I was on the verge of it then; and bit my lip to keep a straight face as I stepped out shivering in

the cool autumn air, beside the skinny, red-bearded driver. He reminded me, for some reason or other, of a shaven lion I had once seen sitting on its haunches in a cage. We waited until the Deputy succeeded in rising, after several grunting efforts, and then started wedging through the door like a chicken coming out of its shell. He placed a ponderous foot on the high running-board, making me retreat as far as the handcuffs permitted, for fear he might overturn the cab. The driver was also alarmed for he pushed at the air with his gloved hands as though warding off this immense triple-chinned man.

" Be keerful, now, jes be keerful."

" I'll make it."

He brought his other foot out from the cab letting it swing clear, so that it seemed to me the ground had come up to meet it. Then, with a satisfied grunt he removed the first one from the running-board and the cab lurched back into place.

We stood at the foot of a short flight of stone steps that shone in the sea of blackness like pearl-white teeth. They led to the closed door of a shadowy-outlined building and, while I gazed up at it in awe, the Deputy shook out the creases in his

trousers, and turned to address the driver yawning and stretching beside me.

"I'll be right back, Thompson."

"Dinky!" It sounded in the clear air like a conductor ringing up a tram fare.

We ascended . . . and when we reached the top step and waited for the bell to be answered, the black sea gradually swept over our lion-like driver. I envied him and wondered if he'd been willing to have exchanged places with me in spite of the thirty or forty years between us.

2

Someone with a lantern held low in his hand opened the door and the Deputy accosted him in a patronizing manner: "Hello Sup'r' Arnold, I brought down another 'n for you."

"You're not doing me a favor, Benson," was the brief reply in a low, sober voice, as the man with the lantern held it up to examine me. "We're both working for the State."

I averted my face, the light smarting my eyes. It was immediately lowered. Benson stood with his broad back to the open door, through which a draft was coming and coercing the white-tongued flame in the globe to lick the sides of it, pouting over what the Superintendent had said:

"Oh, well, sure, I know that, but — "

"Come, come," broke in the other, shaking the lantern so that its white tongue seemed to stick straight up in surprise, "I want to get this over with. Take the cuffs off the boy and hand over his papers. It's away past midnight now."

Benson made a bustle about closing the door and finding the papers in his inside coat pocket. The fat on him quivered. He uttered apologetic words while inserting a tiny key into the lock of my cuff:

" It's a long jump from where we come, Mr. Arnold, you know that. If I wasn't 'fraid of all our good work goin' to waste baggin' him after he broke jail, I'd a clapped him back in at the capital and waited overnight in a hotel myself. That's why I 'phoned in as soon as we had him to say we were comin' right up. I guess you read all about him."

Mr. Arnold didn't answer. He was going over my papers with the lantern held close to them and it seemed as though the light in it was as interested as he. I rubbed my freed wrist and darted furtive glances at him, while the glinting-eyed Deputy beside me slipped the handcuffs into his pocket, pushed back the peak of his Stetson, and leaned with folded arms against the door.

He was a little round-bellied man of about fifty with a sunburnt face and soft blue eyes that had bags under them. He had a high furrowed forehead, thin gray hair and eyebrows. On the crown of his head was a bald patch over which long strands of

hair were combed from the sides as though he was trying to conceal it. The tip of his solid, bridged nose was a little red, and his cheeks were puffed out with tobacco, that he chewed very slowly and thoughtfully, as he turned over the pages of my commitment papers with the thumb of the hand that held them.

I withdrew my eyes from his countenance in confusion when he suddenly raised his mild ones to scan me again; and Benson, unfolding his arms, pointed at the paper and attempted to reinstate himself, by deposing in a harsh, jeering voice that made his three little chins shake like mounds: "He's a Sheeney, all right, I — "

"Never mind now! " he was snapped at. "All the information we need is on his commitment."

Benson straightened up, pulled down his hat, and cleared his throat. I instinctively stepped away from him and nearer to Mr. Arnold.

"I guess I may as well be goin' — if the 'mitment's all right," he said in a dull, cold voice.

"Yes — good night."

Benson snorted and left without answering, slamming the door behind him.

3

Mr. Arnold took me by the arm and said kindly: "Come, my boy, we both need sleep."

The greater part of my fear had left me and I walked trustingly by his side. We were in a narrow corridor and the lantern cast fantastic shadows on the walls, ceiling and floor.

"A little curly-headed brown-eyed Jew boy to adorn our dreadful institution," he chuckled deep down in his throat and the walls seemed to chuckle with him. "Well, well, won't Josie be pleased."

I felt a note of sadness in the dying echo of his voice, and as we moved along side by side, our elbows touching, I was conscious of a degree of sorrow for myself, and for him, also.

"Tell me something about yourself," he suddenly paused to ask; and it seemed to me that he asked it stubbornly as if he had just made up his mind to do so.

We were standing very close. His stomach almost touched my chest. The little bags under his small blue eyes that shone with kindness and weariness,

quivered; and, for the first time, through his partly-opened mouth I caught the scent of whiskey infiltered with that of tobacco.

His question abashed me and, not knowing where to begin, I hung my head and dropped my eyes to the lantern he was carrying: the tongue of flame was so motionless now it looked like a painted flower, and it seemed to me that it was waiting, breathless, to hear what I had to say. He patted me on the head and coached:

"You're fifteen, son, aren't you?"

"Yes sir, going on sixteen."

"And this is your first time away from home?"

"Yes sir."

"It's in the north, isn't it?"

"Yes sir."

"And you ran away from it after seeing a lot of crazy moving pictures or reading a lot of crazy books, to come south looking for adventure?"

I was grateful to him for putting it this way and, glancing up into his interested face, promptly answered: "Yes sir! Yes sir!"

"Good!" he emphasized, his blue eyes twinkling with amusement, and the expanding furrows

in his forehead seeming to make the thin gray hair on his temples rise. A drop of tobacco juice ran over his lips. He wiped it instantly with the back of a forefinger and then added gravely, but in a voice which had lost none of its kindness: "Now, I think we're getting somewhere."

I, too, felt as though we were getting somewhere and wanted to unburden a multitude of things that were weighing on my heart and mind. But as he glanced down at my eager, upturned face, running his eyes over it, he suddenly began trembling all over like an aspen leaf, more tobacco juice flowed over the sides of his mouth, and giving me a slight shove with the lantern and his hand, he burst out in pain and emotion, the very words seeming to be wrung out of him almost against his will, "Run! Boy! Run! and let me square myself with the Lord for once by saving a soul from being warped! You've got a good clean light in your eyes."

I retreated in amazement and, coming up to the wall, crouched there with the palms of my hands against it and my mouth agape, in the grip of entangled emotions.

His sunburnt face was flushed and the tip of his

bridged nose seemed to be aglow. The smell of whiskey from his mouth was stronger. Tobacco juice was all over his chin. He passed a shaking hand over his brow, like a man in a fever, and took it away wet. His eyes were filled with an unmistakable anguish. He shook himself as though coming out of a trance, and just then the front door opened and another man with a lantern entered. Mr. Arnold quickly turned his back on him, pulled out a handkerchief from his roomy trouser-pocket, and stepping over to take me by the arm once more, muttered something under his breath while wiping the dampness from his face. The newcomer caught up with us as we started to turn into a door marked 'Visitors' Room,' near the end of the corridor.

" Ah'll take 'im off yo' hands Mr. A'nold. Ah's on my way to the cook shack, an' this is my las' roun' 'fore supper."

Mr. Arnold hesitated; and then dropping his hand whispered, " Good night," in a lifeless voice. The night watchman opened the door and we left Mr. Arnold standing in the corridor, gazing after us in the desolate manner of a mother whose son has gone off to war.

4

The night watchman, a lean, wiry, dark-skinned man in overalls and a slouch hat, who walked pigeon-toed, led me silently through the Visitors' Room: a large room filled with benches and a long table; through the Bookkeeper's and Superintendent's offices: both small ones, adjoining; and into a short, square hallway that contained a steep, wooden, wall-hugging staircase.

He motioned with his lantern for me to precede him. The stairs ended on the second landing and I waited near a closed door. There were several others on both sides of the hall. The hall was carpeted and faintly lit by a lamp in a wall bracket. At the other end was a staircase similar to the one I had climbed.

When the watchman came up he brushed me aside and opened the first door, beside which I was standing in uncertainty. Then he stepped back and held high his lantern as I entered. "Git yo' bearin's now."

The room was spacious and high ceilinged, bare of furniture, and smelled of disinfectant. The walls were whitewashed. A bed stood in a corner near a window that was double-screened. A curtain hid the upper pane.

" Got 'em? "

" Yes sir."

He pulled the door to and locked it, leaving me alone to undress in the dark. I did so in a great hurry; and then crawling under the blankets I covered my head with them, and lay awake, crying, quivering, and whispering strenuous prayers, until sleep floated by and took me over.

5

I opened my lids in broad daylight to gaze into the large gray eyes of a white-haired man, with a long, pale, smooth-skinned face, a bristling white mustache, and bushy white eyebrows: the image of Buffalo Bill. He stared at me with such hardness in his round, rabbit-like eyes, that for an instant I got the impression that he was reducing me to a kernel.

"Good mawnin'," he greeted in a musical drawl. "Do you-all wish yo' breakfast fetched up, suh?"

Something in his attitude warned me that he wasn't jesting. Five of his pink-nailed tapering fingers had a delicate hold of my blanket; and I wondered how long he'd been inspecting me with bent back before deciding that I was to be awakened.

"Mister, I didn't know what time they wan' cha to get up here," I said in dead earnest, unable to wrench my gaze from his, although I wanted to.

"Shouldn't wonder, suh," he replied in the same soft-spoken manner, dropping my blankets, and then craning his neck and twirling the end of his

mustache around his left forefinger before straightening up. " Mr. A'nold's been kinda neglectful since returnin' from the Sanitarium lahst."

He was tall and handsome and dressed like a dandy in a blue serge suit and white linen shirt with a blue bow tie attached to it. A hard, greenish glint was lurking in his eyes. He twirled the other end of his mustache.

" Suh, I take it, it's pleasant lyin' in bed till half past eight o'clock? "

His drawling voice had an edge on it. I eyed him in consternation not knowing what to answer. My clothes were lying at his feet and I couldn't will myself to reach for them. To ask him whether I should get up or not would sound ridiculous. What did he expect of me? My uneasiness increased and I drew up my legs and gripped the blanket.

" Mr. A'nold was up an' aroun' at six this mawnin', suh? "

" Court is coming to an end — he's about to pronounce sentence," I thought. The disinfected air in the room seemed to grow denser and the whitewashed walls to draw closer. I reproached Mr. Arnold in my mind for getting me into this predica-

ment. . . . My terrified imagination carried me further when I suddenly remembered what had occurred last night, and I almost believed that he was the instigator of this, and had thought up all kinds of monkey business to try out on new boys.

I determined to dart by this whiskered Sphinx with the long legs and arms in case he swooped down upon me, and try to gain the open door behind him. I began calculating my chances, measuring the distance with my eyes. When they came to the doorway, a beautiful red-headed boy appeared in it as though by magic.

"Mr. Harrison! Mr. Harrison!" he called loudly and excitedly and all in one breath. "Mr. Arnold's downstairs askin' for you. There's a telegram sayin' as how they've kotched Frank LaRue and Frank Chaney on the toll bridge right nigh the Kentucky side."

A wild gleam leaped into Mr. Harrison's eyes and his mustache trembled. He turned on his heel and looked critically at the boy who stood in the entrance with his mouth still open.

"An' what's Mr. A'nold doin' here, Paul, may

I ask you-all? " His voice was filled with sarcasm. " Who's at the baan tendin' to the hog killin'? "

" Mr. Arnold left Uncle Bodleigh in charge. He took sick to the stomach his self and came in."

" H'm."

Mr. Harrison's long legs carried him to the door, in the meanwhile his tongue ordering Paul to get the new boy " breakfusted, dressed in, and then turned over to Mr. Sanger."

" Yes sir," returned Paul with alacrity as he passed him.

I jumped out of bed and Paul came in to regard me with curiosity while I put on my clothes. A slender boy of seventeen, a little taller than myself, about four feet eight, and dressed in overalls, a khaki jumper, and a blue shirt that was open at the collar. He had a mass of silky and wavy red hair, light red eyebrows, an aquiline nose, smooth red-tinged cheeks, and small but clear blue eyes that sparkled like agates in his round face. He could easily have passed for a girl; and indeed, I thought of embracing him in gratitude for having delivered me from the white-whiskered Sphinx. I offered my hand instead:

"Hey, Kid, put 'er there, if it hadn't been for you he'd have eaten me up alive."

"More'n likely," he laughed, his white teeth flashing as he shook my hand. And then he grew earnest and added with knit eyebrows and a slight incline of his head: "They ain't no tellin' what's hatchin' in Mr. Harrison's dome: he's as daffy as kin be found."

"You bet!"

"But I heerd Mr. Arnold tellin' him this mawnin' to 'low for you havin' eight hours sleep like the rest."

My head came out of the tail end of the shirt that I had just begun sticking it into. "Well, who in hell's running this place, anyway?"

"Stumps me, new boy," he replied, shrugging his slender shoulders and continuing talking as he walked over to the window behind my bed to pull up the shade. "Mr. Arnold's supposed to be. But Mr. Harrison claims he ain't competent; and's usin' his friends at the capital and elsewhere to try edgin' him out; and he got all the other officers lined up ready to swear agin him, too."

I asked several more questions while lacing my

shoes, and learned that Mr. Harrison was Assistant Superintendent and Disciplinarian, having direct charge of all the officers and boys; and that Mr. Arnold was compelled to spend almost all of his time in the city, the office, or inspecting the farms and the Coloured Department, of which he was Superintendent also, and that he had had two nervous breakdowns since Paul was there, because he was striving too hard to drown something inside of himself with whiskey.

"—And Mr. Harrison knows it—and it's got him skunked tryin' to find out what 'tis! "

He said this last in a tone of resentment as though he was sharing the secret with Mr. Arnold and thought it was no one else's business. I raised my head to give him an understanding and sympathizing wink. But he had turned his back to me and was looking down through the pane, his forehead pressed against it.

" Yonder's Stephen Sassberry takin' little Josie out for a ride on her pony."

I walked over to see, picking my coat up from the bed.

On the road beneath, just passing the stone steps

the Deputy and I had ascended, a little figure in a blue bonnet and blue cape bobbed up and down on the back of a slow-moving pony with a brown mane. Beside her walked a thin, erect boy with the bridle in one hand and the other on her back. They were going down to the highway the cab-driver had turned off to get to the Reformatory. It ran east and west, and between it and the Reformatory was a wide expanse of lawn and garden, while on the other side, as far as the eye could see, stretched acres and acres of uncultivated fields, in some of which men and boys were at work breaking the ground with hoes and rakes. A blurred sun seemed to be watching them morosely from a white, cloudy sky above. Josie, Stephen, and the pony arrived at the highway and turned east. A block or so up were a group of houses.

" Stephen's takin' her to the store for some candy," commented Paul with a sigh. " I sure hope Mrs. Arnold asks Mr. Harrison for me when Steve goes out next month. 'Tendin' to Josephine Arnold is a better gravy train than even the one I'm on now: office boy. There ain't a Fourth or Fifth Division boy but what wouldn't give his right arm to be

ridin' it. My younger brother Ned used to, but Chock Norton, the big wolf, searched him on the highway when he was comin' in from the store with Josie one day, found a plug of chewin' and a sack of Durham, and 'ported it to Mr. Harrison. Ned lost out on that account and was put on the Moanas' Bench besides. Po' little Jo' cried and begged Mrs. Arnold to get Ned back — but it didn't do no good."

I asked him if she were Mr. Arnold's daughter and he replied in the affirmative, adding with pride and conviction as he turned away from the window:

"But it's got so she ain't all his'n any more. 'Our baby Jo' is like a shaft of sunshine,' he once told Mrs. Arnold in the office, 'placed in our hands by Him above to play about the school.'"

6

As we passed by the other closed doors, on our way to the staircase opposite the one that led to the office, he told me in a derisive whisper: " Yonder's the monitor's quarters — big boys off the line — an' most of 'em are wolves — better watch out for yo'self tonight, new boy, be sure."

We descended, and, before I had time to question him about this, he turned the knob of a dark thick door that barred our passage, and someone beating on a pan with a spoon heralded me into the new world.

It was a diminutive woman with a shrivelled face and rheumy eyes in a black dress and shawl. She stood animatedly on an upturned tub in the center of an enormous water-flooded dining-room, from which came the strong smell of yellow soap, banging on the dishpan and giving shrill-voiced orders to dozens of beaverlike boys who were scattered all over the place, some on hands and knees scrubbing under long tables: five of which stood on each side

of the aisle we were in, with their benches piled on top; others were sitting or standing on sills washing windows with soapy rags; and across the way, alongside the doorway of the other entrance, a small boy with white hair, a freckled face, and rubber boots that came almost to his hips, was playing a short hose on a steam table and shaking his head and creasing his face when water splashed into it.

"Birgus Cooper, I'll have Mr. Harrison after you in a minute!" she shrieked at the top of her voice, and above the racket she was creating with her pan. "Johnny Hamilton quit that snickering! Pieface — you know that window ain't clean — get back to it — quick!"

Her voice sounded as though it might tear her throat any minute, but she kept to her high pitch, and I marvelled at the power of it. She had a long, sharp nose with which the wrinkles in her face seemed to be angry, and a small round head of puffed-up black hair with several combs visible in it. She wore ear-rings, and a white petticoat whose hem we could see under her sateen dress.

The boys, large and small, with the sleeves of their blue shirts rolled back to their elbows and

their overalls up to their thighs, scrubbed and washed away as though they were trying to obliterate the very spots on which they were stationed. I was about to ask Paul if it were all right to start over, when she spied us and screwed up her dark, moist eyes.

"Paul Tanner, what do you mean by standing there with that new boy? Back upstairs and into the office until we get through, qui–ick!"

"Aunt Lizzie—I got permission to get him breakfusted and dressed!" Paul stood undaunted and nudged me while he spoke in almost as high-pitched a voice as the woman's.

She quit banging; my ears began ringing. Her face and voice seemed gentler: "Then bring him across, Paul Tanner; and mind you don't get yourself wet, new boy."

We started over on our heels. She was looking at me with interest and all the boys had suddenly ceased working as though she had given them permission. She became aware of it just as I went by her and furiously beat the pan and screamed. This startled me and I slipped, almost upsetting Paul, who caught hold of me and helped me regain my

balance. A spontaneous burst of laughter drowned out Aunt Lizzie's pan and throat for a moment. It was short-lived. When we had gained the door she was tongue-lashing them back to work:

" Frank Goodman — no dinner for you! Chicken-mites Mr. Harrison'll be by any minute! Robert Locket I'm ashamed of you! "

" Damn! " I exploded, as we passed through and paused outside to don our caps and button our coats. " That little woman's a hell-cat, Paul, ain't she? "

" Naw," he vindicated in haste with a shake of his curly head. " Her heart's in the right place. It's only on Black Wednesday that she's a ridin' fool. That's what the dinin'-room boys named it; and they ain't sorry to see it come aroun' either, cause it rates 'em raisin bread and sweetened coffee, after. She ain't never 'ported one of 'em yet and she's always snoopin' aroun' the kitchen for good things to get 'em from the leavin's of the officers' table and Mrs. Arnold's. When you see what kind of meals they spread for us here, new boy, you're goin' to wish you were one of her crew."

7

The October morning blew its cold breath in our faces, heightening the colour of Paul's cheeks till they were a shade lighter than his hair. As we moved away from the dining-room, he remarked, pointing out the kitchen, that I'd better eat plenty if anything was left over from breakfast, because it was the best meal we had.

The kitchen was about a dozen feet from us, the nearest of two brown cottages that were joined to form the letter L. They had slanting, shingled roofs, each with a brick chimney near its center. Wreaths of smoke were rising from both, but the kitchen's smoke was thicker and blacker. A common porch led to their entrances.

On the porch Paul indicated the door of the cottage facing south, through which a sound of chattering could be heard, and told me that it was the Fifth Division playroom, with Mr. Sanger in charge, and the little boys now in it were part of the extra gang kept around for pealing potatoes and onions,

or picking up in the yard, and things like that. The rest were in school, detailed to their duties, or out in the fields, that the State owned or rented from farmers, preparing new ground for the Spring sowing.

"—Nothin' to be peeled right now 'cause he's allowin' 'em to talk," he observed, placing his hand on the knob of the kitchen door that looked west, and putting his shoulder against it.

I followed him into a short passageway—a through-going one with a low ceiling. On the back porch stood a broad-shouldered person in white, poised to throw a large tomato can toward a rubbish pile in the yard. He paused, his arm in mid-air, to turn his heavy head and take stock of us.

"Effie Secks," Paul addressed him, in a tone I thought rather sharp. "Mr. Harrison said for me to tell you to give this new boy his breakfast."

He flung the can away with a vicious oath and then wheeled about to glare at us through oblong-shaped eyes. Although he was dressed from head to foot in white, he did not look clean. His arms hung low from his shoulders and his fat oily face

under his chef's cap was spotted with pimples and blackheads.

"It's a hell of a time to be fetchin' any one in for breakfast," he said in a harsh, disagreeable voice, sticking out his grooveless chin. "I gotta good mind —"

Paul seemed prepared for whatever was coming and broke in testily, rancour in his eyes: "It can't be helped Effie Secks, Mr. Harrison said this boy's to have somethin'!"

"Brats an' punks!" The cook made a grimace and shook a black fist at us. "Allus comin' aroun' botherin' some'n. Git —"

"You're a brat and a punk and a wolf yourself, Effie Secks!" Paul shot back at him again, vibrating like a wire from his suddenly excited state of mind. "An' what's more, got the big head since they took you off the line last month . . . now!"

And Paul threw up his fists in a defensive attitude. I determined to stick by him and did the same. Effie Secks who had taken a step forward, with his piggish face set and a motion as though to jerk his apron off, hesitated and looked swiftly at us with his narrow slits of eyes. A little, round, fright-

ened head, with black hair standing straight up on it, and a pug nose, was poked out of the arched opening between him and ourselves, turned this way and that, and as quickly withdrawn.

" Pah! I ain't goin' back on the line 'count of you-all," he gave up the attack, shrugging his broad shoulders. " But if I ever git the little dormitory at nights, you fiery red-headed punk," he flung at Paul through stained teeth as he stepped into the kitchen sideways, " I'll have you walkin' spread-legged as long as I'm straw bossin' in it! "

Paul winced, his knees bending a little, and his face turned redder than his hair. His hands were still clenched and the pupils of his eyes like disks of blue fire. I thought it best to forego breakfast and placed my arm on his, whispering: " Come on, Paul, what do you say? Let's go, I don't want you to get into trouble on my account."

8

"What do you mean by off the line?" I asked him, as we stepped out on the porch and closed the door behind us. "That guy looked old enough to be my father. Ain't he a guard or something?"

Paul was still smouldering, but now he raised his red eyebrows and gazed at me in alarm: "Lord no! Man! Man! Never back-talk an officer — it means the moanas' bench and a whippin'."

And he hastily explained that the school had a monitorial system by which some of the older boys — the institutionalized ones — this Effie Secks was not under thirty — were given certain responsibilities and allowed to share in the maintenance of discipline, being granted in return a small salary, better food, and much liberty after work. "— Which saves the State money by cuttin' down the expense of hirin' more officers," he concluded. "And it's up to Mr. Arnold to do it or the Prison Board'll appoint another man."

The playroom door behind us opened and we

parted to let a tall, thin cross-looking woman pass by. She had heavy eyebrows, very large blue eyes, and an unkempt head of black hair. She wore tortoise-shell glasses, the rim of them resting far away from her eyes, on the tip of her long bony nose, and they appeared in great danger of slipping off. Her nose twitched as though she were muscling them up.

"That's Mrs. Sanger," Paul informed me after he had bid her "good mawnin'," and she returned his greeting in a low, deep voice without looking at either of us. "Mr. Sanger's havin' a hell of a time coaxin' her to draw what little she's worth out of the bank and turn it over to him — that's what he married her for."

We watched her walk toward the dining-room, stoop-shouldered, as though she were stumbling. Paul remarked with a chuckle: "Give her a pair of pants instead of that loose, gray dress she's wearin' and she could pass fur any boy's daddy."

I thought so too — and he added with a sneer: "And if her greedy, bird-legged husband slipped on a dress he'd be taken for a fuzzy-faced woman. They get along like oil and fire."

Mrs. Sanger entered the dining-room.

"She'll be out in a minute. Just wants to chew the fat with Aunt Lizzie about her husband. She's got charge of the officers' dinin'-room and ought to be up there now."

I thought we'd been dallying too long.

"No, let's wait," he urged, pulling my sleeve, "we've got plenty time, and it'll mean that much less hangin' aroun' the office for me, doin' nothin' but listenin' to Mr. Arnold drinkin' and mutterin' to himself or the bookkeeper, Mr. Reeves; and besides, a guy needs all the fresh air he can get after leavin' the dormitory ev'y mawnin' — you'll see, new boy."

I offered no objections and he suggested: "Let's sit down on this porch, and I'll tell anybody foxin' up on us that we stopped so's I could shake a stone out o' my shoe."

We sat down, leaning our backs against the wall near the playroom door. No sound came from behind it.

"Mr. Sanger's sittin' 'em up for makin' too much racket."

His wife came out from Aunt Lizzie's headquar-

ters and, turning to the left, walked a few steps with her eyes on the ground.

"Always lookin' at her nose and watchin' it grow longer," Paul ruefully commented.

She entered an adjoining hall and started climbing a staircase in it, wriggling from side to side and placing a hand on the knee of each leg as it was raised.

9

The group of buildings we had our eyes on was shaped like a hexagon cut in half. Opposite us the dining-room stretched about sixty feet, and had for arms two other brown wooden structures of the same length and height: three stories. These were the administrative buildings, and Paul told me something about them: The schoolroom was over Aunt Lizzie's dining-hall and could be reached by a flight of stairs that started on the ground between the hall and the kitchen and wound themselves up to it. School was now in session, the morning boys being inside. On the third floor was the large dormitory from which several boys had once escaped by climbing through the chimney onto the roof, and many others had gotten away by cutting the thick screen windows and letting themselves down with knotted sheets. Every time there was an escape the monitor who happened to be on duty was put back on the line and another one taken off. This meant that he had lost his gravy train and had to serve time like any one else.

The right arm housed the commissary on the bottom, then the Arnold's home, and a wing of the dormitory on top. The left held the big boys' playroom, the officers' dining-hall, and above it, another dormitory wing.

"That's the main works," finished Paul, "and now let's beat it. Here comes ole lady Sanger back this way to get her snuff box, or — "

And dropping his voice to a whisper he naïvely informed me of a certain ailment that she had.

We scrambled to our feet and left the porch. I stole a side glance at Mrs. Sanger as we walked away; she was oblivious of our presence, her large eyes with their shaggy brows being fixed on her tortoise-shell glasses, watching them it seemed, as she hurried along, so that they wouldn't dare slide off. One arm she swung widely, completing a half circle, and the other was pressed tight against an apron pocket. I concluded that her hasty return was not because of the lack of tobacco.

10

The cheerless sun buried itself among the thin, white, swift-sailing clouds, as though unwilling to come along with us on a trip through the Reformatory.

Our backs were turned on the administrative buildings, and Paul, with his slender shoulders huddled, his belted brown cap pulled low over his eyes, and his hands in the pockets of his khaki jumper, set a very slow pace, turning this way and that, calling my attention to everything within eyesight.

We were moving along a narrow walk, the only piece of pavement in the institution. It began at the dining-room, ran north for a block, curved west for another half, and then abruptly ended. Extending the full length of the curve was a red ramshackle building in which were combined, on the first floor, the Laundry, Receiving Room, Bathroom, and Toilet; and on the second, the little boys' Dormitory, Clothing Room and Tailoring Shop. It was

built on elevated ground and behind it, hidden as yet from our sight, were the barns, pig pens, poultry houses, dairy, cannery, playground, shoe shop and warehouse.

On our left, a short distance from the walk, was a telephone pole that a year ago had caused the death of some monitor: He'd been leaning against it, a half hour or so after a thunder storm, carrying on a conversation with Mr. Harrison, when a bolt of lightning coming out of a gloomy sky struck the pole and him. His clothing and body were ripped into shreds; and Mr. Harrison was knocked flat for a moment. Springing to his feet when the thunder rumbled over him, he went flying terror-stricken and wide-eyed into the big boys' playroom, where he crouched in a corner pulling at his white whiskers and mumbling something about the "visible wrath of the invisible Lord." The monitor's clothing-shreds were now on exhibition in the Laundry for a small admission fee to visitors, the money going to his family.

Alongside the pole was a five-foot post with a rope-bell on it. This was rung for meals, rising time, bed time, Sunday School, services, runaway boys,

and what not. Beyond it, a grassy block away, and set apart by itself with open fields for a background, squatted a two-story brick building surrounded by shrubs and trees: the hospital. A boy with a large head and a basket under his arm was entering it and Paul said, " That's Turnip Head fetchin' the sick boys somethin' from Mrs. Arnold's own table."

Three quarters of a mile past the hospital and near the river, reached by a dirt road that ran straight from the administrative buildings, was the Coloured Boys Department where " time was bein' done in the rough "; and, on the other side of the river, built upon a bluff, the capital's penitentiary. In some cases when the older boys, both white and coloured, were caught after running away, Mr. Arnold was compelled to take out papers transferring them to it.

" But I'd just as lief be there right now," Paul said with an air of bravado and a tilt of his chin, " as waitin' for my diploma here."

This statement troubled me and I frowned upon it, for I recalled the Deputy's words: " Reformatory Road is a mighty short cut to Penitentiary Aven-oo, Sheeney! "

11

Several feet away from the sidewalk bend that we were nearing was a small rock pile, with wooden-handled stone hammers lying here and there about it. I was asking Paul what its purpose was, when the long-drawn-out signal of a railroad train coming from somewhere in the distance and on the right, drew my attention away. Paul heaved a deep sigh and accompanied the engine's open throttle in a plaintive, sing-song voice: "Go-wan-bo-oy; go-wan-bo-oy; yo'-home-ain't-here and you know it."

Something tugged at my heart and I wished I were with it wherever it was going. I confided as much to Paul. A crafty smile played on his lips and he probed me with his small eyes. Then, after a quick back-glance at the administrative buildings, he half chided, half tempted, looking at me furtively out of the corner of his eye: "Wishin' 'll never get you no place in this Reform School, boy. What's to stop me and you from takin' it on the lam right now, huh? Make up yo' mind — "

My heart throbbed at his words and the blood rushed to my face. The Reformatory did look easy and the broad daylight in the fields all about it seemed to be inviting one with open arms to lam.* Down by the railroad track, about a hundred yards distant, near a string of thin-boarded sheds, were the only perceptible signs of life: a half-dozen or so of small peasant-like boys in short, heavy coats and belted caps, were moving slowly along at arms length, picking things up from the ground and throwing them into a wheelbarrow being pushed in their midst by another boy. A few paces in their rear, walked a tall, swaggering man, see-sawing a strap behind his neck. They were returning to the main buildings and had their backs on us; and, if I wanted to lam, a clear field was ahead of me: surely this was much easier than breaking out of jail.

"All right, Paul," I whispered eagerly, turning around and hoping that he was really in earnest, "I'm willing to take a chance if you are?"

A sheepish smile broke out on his round, colour-tinged face. His hands went deeper into the pockets

* Escape.

of his jumper and he avoided my gaze by half turning his head to glance down at the rock pile, while saying quietly and gravely as though a dozen more years had just been added to his age: "Naw, new boy, I was only throwin' out a feeler to see if you had it in you to lam. Too much risk tryin' it this way, and I'd lose my gravy train here if we run into bad luck. There's trusties spotted all over the place ready to run in for an officer or monitor an' give the general alarm. Then the minute that bell yonder pealed, all the farmers for miles aroun' would drop plows and cows and grab for dogs to send sniffin' after us. They're's po' as sin and 'ud drag back kin-folks for the measley reward offered. Naw, new boy, unless you tried it in the dark or workin' a right smart piece from the school, there'd be as much chance of makin' a lam good as — as —"; he sought about in his mind for a suitable comparison, scratching his curly red hair with the peak of his cap and raising his clear blue eyes to look about; and then suddenly his eyes blazed and his upper lip and nose quivered, and pointing an accusing finger toward the tall, swaggering man with the strap, who was arrogantly calling one of

the boys back to him, he completed in bitterness: " as much chance as that big wolf Chock Norton has of sweet-talkin' my younger brother Ned like he's aimin' to try doin' again right now! "

His words were incomprehensible to me and I watched in puzzlement the scene being enacted before us, at the same time listening to him heatedly illustrate it:

" Chock's pointin' the strap that's doubled up in his hand to an ole rag lyin' in the thick grass. Ned's gettin' the rap for overlookin' it. More'n likely it was in Hog Jaw's path as much as it was in Ned's but Chock's taken to ridin' him every chance he gets. It's because he's set on sweet-talkin' Ned and Ned ain't the kind that'll stand for't. Better watch out yo'self, tonight, new boy, be sure. Ned's stoopin' pickin' up the rag, now, and Chock's gazin' down at him rubbin' his lantern jaw and grinnin' with his wide mouth. Ned's in for a handwhippin' now if Chock's goin' to take this for an excuse: he's the head monitor, Mr. Harrison's right hand man, and got 'em clearin' up aroun' the grounds. Takes turn about with Pig Iron in the big dormitory every fourth month. Been here nigh onto a dozen years,

and was sentenced fur double murder, the same as was Mankiller, who's off the line too. Mr. Arnold winces when he has to talk to either of 'em. Now Ned's standin' there in misery, shufflin' his feet and lookin' anywhere but at Chock who's waggin' his tongue. Ned has to listen to him. Chock's tried bargainin' with him in every which way already and — here's Mr. Harrison, comin' out from aroun' the kitchen yard wipin' his mustached-mouth with one hand and beckonin' Chock over to him with the other — and Chock is sendin' Ned back with the rest, lettin' him off this time. More'n likely Chock's goin' to Clarksville after the runaways. Trust him anywhere. Couldn't chase him away. Mankiller either: got better go's in here than they ever had on the outside. Come, on — new boy — let's mope, Mr. Harrison's got eyes like a hawk."

12

We passed the first door of the ramshackle building that ran parallel with the bend, and were on our way to the main entrance, Paul still seething and telling me some revolting things about sexual life in the school, when somebody poked a head out of that door and shouted nasally after us:

"Hi thar, Paul Tanner, what you-all doin', anyhow, tryin' to slip by on me 'thout callin', so's Mr. Harrison'll shake me from my gravy train?"

Paul stopped talking to me to glance back disdainfully at the face, a puffed, smoke-dried one with rings around the eyes and two front upper teeth missing, and retorted: "I yelled, 'Goin' by here,' Thumbsucker, and I can prove it by this new boy — didn't I?"

Thumbsucker scowled his disbelief, but I affirmed Paul's statement by vigorously nodding my head, although I hadn't heard him yell, "Goin' by here," and didn't know what it was all about.

"Well, you-all'd better," he warned, knitting his

black brows. It was hard to tell his age. "Ye needn't think I ain't tendin' my station — 'cause I'm in here disinfectin' Jockey Cans. Say it ag'in!"

"Goin' by here," Paul reluctantly complied.

"Now you, new boy."

"Goin' by here," I also complied.

Thumbsucker put the back of a thumb in his mouth filling up the gap left by the missing teeth in the roof of it, and started slowly to withdraw his head into his place of duty, but Paul detained him with a sneer: "You ain't foxin' up on nobody little ole boy, so's you can stool on us."

Thumbsucker's black eyes gleamed and he removed his thumb long enough to bark out twice: "Hite! Hite!" *

Paul instructed me as we turned away, never to pass a trusty's station, unless I thought I could get by with it, without first giving the password and hearing it challenged. This one happened to be the Toilet, and Thumbsucker of the Fifth Division and one of the schools' stool pigeons, was Toilet Boy.

The door leading to the Bathroom and Laundry was open. Paul told me to wait in the stone passage

* "All right! All right!"

that separated them, while he went searching for Mr. Crane, the officer in charge, cautioning me in the meanwhile, with upraised brows and rolling eyes, not to let Mr. Crane catch me talking to any of the boys working under him, because: "He's a leather jerkin' fool and when once he gets started don't know when to stop!"

I waited near the banister of a flight of stairs that went up to the Fifth Division Dormitory. The wide room at my right that Paul entered was foggy with lye-laden steam. I caught a whiff of it and sneezed. A sound of sloshing water came from the pivoty, copper-bottomed laundry tubs he was encircling. Shirtless, various-sized boys, some in their twenties, others just out of diapers, stood spraddled-legged over several of the tubs stirring up soaking clothes with long wooden paddles. Moisture was on their faces and arms.

I was about to turn my head and glance into the Bathroom, when Paul came circling back followed by a tall, powerfully built man, whom it seemed he had been compelled, to his dismay, to conjure up from out of the fog. He was dark, handsome, stern-faced, and wore baggy corduroy trousers and a

gray sweater low at the neck. Thick black hair covered his chest and arms. A long, tan leather strap dangled in his hand. Paul paused beside me, but the man strode over to the Bathroom door, and while sizing me up through steel blue eyes, boomed into it in a reverberating voice that shook me to the very roots.

"Chicken Driver!"

A pair of running feet brought their owner up to scare-facedly answer his summons:

"Yas suh?"

"Another new lad."

"Yas suh."

"Bathe him and bring down an outfit."

"Yas suh."

"Then return him to Paul Tanner."

"Yas suh."

He motioned me in with his strap and hand and I walked in sideways eyeing him askance. Chicken Driver came in after me, while Paul remained outside. Mr. Crane closed the door on us and I immediately started to open my mouth, but Chicken Driver checked me with an upraised finger and alarm in his eyes. A second later the door was sud-

denly opened and then closed again. Chicken Driver winked at me and nodded his head as though to say: " Ah told you so."

I undressed silently in a shower-pit in the center of the room, Chicken Driver picking up each article of clothing that I discarded. He was a stocky, flat-footed boy of about my size and age, with deep-set black eyes in his fat, dimpled face, and a round head of short-cropped black hair.

When I was standing naked on the cement he regulated one of the shower-heads for me and then left with my clothes.

The lukewarm water quickened my blood, but failed to dissolve the commingled state of fear and dejectedness enthralling my heart. This was certainly a strange world I had suddenly been dropped into; and, if a Christian boy were as suddenly dropped into a Heder * he wouldn't have felt more miserable.

* Jewish school of learning.

13

The room I was bathing in was a large one with many long, narrow windows in it and a vaulted ceiling. Around three sides of the square shower-pit, that could have served for a swimming pool, ran a trough studded with about fifty shining faucets. This was where the Institution washed up. One towel for every three faucets hung on a low rail above them. Combs and tooth brushes were used in common.

Chicken Driver brought my new outfit; and, while I was getting into it, busied himself polishing a faucet with a rag and some white powder. Every once in a while he left off work to peer through one of the center windows that looked toward the main buildings. He did this as though it were part of his duty, and I wondered why.

The clothes fitted me nicely; my measure evidently had been taken from those I had worn down. With the exception of Paul Tanner, who wore a khaki jumper because he worked in the office, and Effie Secks the cook, I was uniformed now like the

other boys I had seen, and felt more like one of them: heavy woollen underwear, boy scout shoes, blue shirt, short dark coat and belted brown cap.

Chicken Driver dropped his rag and escorted me to the door, where Paul Tanner, who was waiting on the stoop of the Dormitory stairs, took me in charge again and without a word led me from the building. Mr. Crane was nowhere in sight. When we had walked a few steps Paul took me by the arm and imparted in a very low, dramatic voice: "His fingers were just twitchin' fur a little leather-pourin' practice, new boy; and it's a good thing fur you and Chicken Driver that no talkin' came through that door when he opened it."

And I learned by perturbed questioning that almost all the leather jerkers, officers and monitors, in both departments — especially those in the coloured — were jealous of their reputations as such, and tried hard to keep in trim.

When we were passing by the Toilet again I remembered Paul's advice about the countersign and gave it: "Going by here."

"Hite!" came from within.

Paul's teeth flashed and he burst into laughter,

throwing his curly head back. I looked at him in surprise. Thumbsucker came out, his thumb in his mouth, and seeing which way we were headed, shook his free fist at us. He was a smaller boy than I. Paul thumbed his nose at him and shouted back something relating to his work that made his smoke-dried face turn blacker than it was. A moment later, when on our way again, he explained that it was only when leaving the administrative buildings that one was to make them aware of it. I wondered what difference it made and he cleared up the point by adding, that a trusty knew where each boy was detailed, and, if one had no business at the Laundry, Tailor Shop, Hospital, Barn, Cannery, or other places he'd be reported immediately — by going in that direction he may be trying to sneak off the grounds. Many boys had been caught that way.

" Chock Norton was sent after the runaways, all right," he observed, as we went by the rock pile, " and Mr. Harrison ordered the yard-pickers back into the playroom. . . . Now, if Mr. Leach chases Jo' and Frank Arnold out of the classroom after supper, new boy, it means it's to be moana's whippin' night, and you'll hear him pourin' leather."

14

Effie Secks was standing in the kitchen doorway munching with his stumps of decayed teeth on a piece of hot corn-bread, and talking to a man with spectacles on who blocked the playroom entrance. Paul took me straight up to the latter and addressed him as Mr. Sanger.

"Yes?" he inquired in a high voice, turning to Paul with his nose up in the air.

"Here's a new boy for you."

"Oh!"

He gave a little affected start bringing a hand to his breast; and then waved the same hand in an effeminate manner as a signal to dismiss him.

I felt lost without Paul, and while Mr. Sanger was looking me over, I watched him pensively on his way to the dining-room. He detoured near the schoolroom steps to avoid a couple of boys who were pouring a tub-full of dirty water on the ground under the eye of Aunt Lizzie, who was standing behind the screen door. He exchanged a passing

word with Turnip Head who was entering the commissary below the Arnold's with a basket on his arm, and snarled at a tall, hirsute fellow with his eyes hidden by the peak of his cap, who made a peculiar sign as he followed Turnip in. He went by Aunt Lizzie, who opened the door for him with a smile and kind words.

Effie Secks having also kept his eyes riveted on him until he disappeared, now directed them on me, then on Mr. Sanger, and finally wiped his black hands on his apron and turned into the kitchen with a shrug of his heavy shoulders and a summed up: "Humph."

Mr. Sanger and I were alone on the porch. He looked like a woman all right: fat and fuzzy of face, with a small sensitive nose, browless eyes, and long, slicked-back white hair. He wore a gray knitted jersey that was tightly stretched across his broad shoulders and through which the outlines of his overdeveloped bosom could be seen. He was of medium height, about a head shorter than his wife, and had thin, rickety legs that seemed to be in danger of crumbling any moment under the weight that they were bearing.

"Well, I guess you won't be with us very long, will you?" he said at length in a shrill, squeaky voice, glinting at me with his gray birdlike eyes, and rubbing the back of his neck with a white puffy hand.

I didn't know.

"You don't? Haven't any of the rich Tennessee Yahoodles called on you while you were in jail? They never let one of their own kind stay in very long. Aren't you a Yahoodle?"

I didn't know what a Yahoodle was and no one had visited me in jail outside the Juvenile Officer.

"That's funny," he declared without laughing, and in fact seemed to be disappointed.

I wondered what it was that could be so funny and eyed him in uncertainty. He suddenly twisted his small head into the door, the rapidity of the motion making his bosom quiver, and after a very keen survey of something in the playroom his attention came slowly back to me.

"I guess I'll have to let you off light — if you're sure that you aren't a Yahoodle, a Jew boy?"

I flushed. But looking him straight in the face stammered out that I was.

His small eyes glittered and the fuzzy hairs on his fat white face spread into a smile. Then stepping down on the porch he stooped to pat my cheek. A strong smell of coal oil came from his sleek hair. My nose twitched.

"Well, I thought so," he confided in a lowered voice. "I'm seldom mistaken. Listen," he took hold of me by my coat and drew me close. "The last one here had an officers' dining-room job under Mrs. Sanger — my wife. It cost his parents only fifteen dollars a month — yours can easily afford that, can't they, son?"

I was sure they couldn't, and flinched when I was telling him so because his manner had been so ingratiating. He was taken aback, or pretended to be, and scoffed: "You don't say? I thought all Yahoodles were rich: I never seen one yet that wasn't! . . . Oh, well," he snapped his stubby fingers as though he were a good loser, "I guess it'll have to be lowered to ten dollars then — you'll write them about it, won't you son, and give me the letter to mail?"

"Mr. Sanger," I answered, my voice and the expression on my face miserable, "honest to God, my

people ain't got anything, and my mother has to work hard for a living."

He eyed me incredulously and then straightened up, pursed his lips and exploded: "Pah! another brat I've got to waste my time taking care of!"

I watched him in consternation. He yanked off his spectacles, startling me, to rub something out of his left eye with a little finger. His eyelids were red and there were dark circles under his eyes. He blew on his glasses and "ahemed" while wiping the moisture off them with the sleeve of his jersey. Then "aheming" again and shrugging his shoulders, he nodded me into the playroom with a wry look on his fuzzy face.

15

It seemed like passing into a side-show where wax figures were on exhibit. A score of little boys were sitting motionless on a circle of benches, with arms folded, feet crossed, and backs against the wall, hardly daring to breathe. The benches began at the right-hand side of the door, the tallest boys sitting there, and ran around the playroom ending on the left. Each was a few feet removed from the next and could seat half a dozen. They were only a third filled now. The gaps belonged to those in school or at work.

In the center of the room — a square one about fourteen feet from corner to corner and with long double windows on each side, those on the left half eclipsed by the staircase that led to the Sangers' quarters — was a small, round, nickel-plated stove with a long pipe; near the stove an armchair, and coiled upon it, like a snake, a thick, brown, leather strap.

I paused several paces away from the chair, feeling the roving eyes of all the rigid-bodied boys upon

me; and Mr. Sanger, coming in behind, wiping his nose with a handkerchief, called out sharply:

"Get up here, Horsethief!"

A yellow-haired boy with a long face and large gray eyes, sitting under one of the windows that gave a view of the railroad track and open fields beyond it, unfolded his arms, rose, and came up. He had a broken nose, protruding yellow teeth and long ears. His mouth was partly opened, giving his face a silly expression.

Mr. Sanger put his handkerchief away, and taking us each roughly by the arm, turned us around, backs and heels touching one another's, and then proceeded to measure us up by levelling the palm of his puffy hand over the tops of our heads. Horsethief was a little the taller and he was sent back and another one summoned:

"Ned Tanner."

The lad whom Horsethief sat down beside arose. This was Paul's brother and the one whom Chock Norton was trying hard to sweet-talk. A slim, graceful, fair-haired boy of fifteen, with frank blue eyes and an interesting finely carved pale face. He was two years younger than Paul, resembled him

somewhat in features and form, but bore himself more gravely. Mr. Sanger went through the formula again, touching our heads, and then placed me in Ned's care:

"He's to be your mentor until I tell you that the time has come when you no longer need one."

And in a flat, emotionless voice, as though he was reciting something learned by heart, he let drop from his pursed lips, while gazing abstractedly from one seated boy to the other, words from which I gathered that: I must attach myself to my mentor who was to be responsible for me, never leaving my side; he would make me acquainted with the rules and regulations as quickly as possible; and until I left him, any infraction of rules on my part would result in a whipping being received by both.

"So don't pay no mind to what any one else tells you in this Reform School but me, new boy," Ned instructed as I walked over to his bench and sat down between him and Horsethief, "'cause some little ole boys in here'll get you into trouble jes' to find out if you're man enough to take a whippin' in silence."

16

Mr. Sanger yawned, like a fuzzy cat, stretched his short arms and then drawing his chair closer to the stove picked up the strap, sat down with a grunt, and after placing his hands on his knees looked around at all the boys with his spectacled face and gave them permission to talk, adding testily as though treating them to a luxury they didn't deserve:

"But don't overdo it again, now, my patience has been tried enough, and I'll sit you up for a week next time — remember last month?"

The boys unfolded their arms and broke the silence with great caution while he watched them, sighing audibly at first; then a little later when his attention had been relaxed, they began to whisper with restraint, and finally raised their voices by degrees until the playroom was filled with a humming drone. . . . Mr. Sanger scratched his back on that of the armchair, and then fitted his shoulders into its roundness. A minute later he placed

his rickety legs up on the stove's metal plate, clasped his hands behind his fat neck, and closed his browless eyes. His bosom heaved as he breathed, and the strap lying in his lap rose and fell with it.

Ned and I had already exchanged confidences and cottoned to each other.

He and his brother, Paul, had been sent to the Reformatory fourteen months ago for stealing a bicycle between them. Their sentence was indeterminate like mine: they might have to stay until twenty-one. His people were poor and could do nothing about it. They hadn't paid him a visit since his incarceration, the expense of coming down keeping them away.

He had a beautiful little girl friend at home who was the cause of several fist fights between him and Paul. But she was very much in love with Ned; and to convince me, he produced several letters and a small snapshot of her with an avowal written in her hand on the back of it.

" Uh, huh."

I returned the picture and he slipped it back carefully amongst the letters and other treasures

kept by him in a funny-looking pocketbook made from shirt cloth.

" What do you think of her, new boy? "

" Mmn — ! " I wagged my head.

It was the thought of her that made his soul rankle every time Chock Norton and others approached him with their slimy talk . . . and they'd never have their way even if he had to do the remainder of his time standing on his head! No, sir! not by a long shot! He was a man and already had a girl on the outside waiting for him — and he'd come out clean to her, he would! Not like most of the others left! . . . Poor Ned!

When he got over his agitation, in which his pale comely face had turned scarlet and his hands clenched, he leaned his elbows on the window-sill behind us; and, after a few moments, set about telling me in his gentle, drawling voice, of everything concerning the institution that he thought I ought to know or that came to his mind's eye. . . .

There was Hog Jaw over there, seventeen years of age, a line leader and one of Mr. Sanger's paying pets, playing a game of checkers with Peggy, a thin lad with a wooden leg like a pirate's. Chip-

munk, the other line leader and the tallest boy in the division, five foot four, was watching the game over Hog Jaw's shoulder and making suggestions that nettled both Peggy and Hog Jaw, the latter trying to shake him off like he would a fly that had settled on him. Leaning against Peggy's back, trying to go to sleep, was Ivy Sullivan, an unusually pale boy who threw fits and whom Mr. Harrison stood in awe of, though no one else did.

Next to me were yellow-haired Horsethief and Froghunter, a freckle faced boy with wiry black hair and warts on his hands, playing odds and evens with marbles for keeps. At the same game several benches away from them were Little Pig Iron and Little Blackie, nicknamed after monitors whose favourites they were. And across the way, at the tail end of the line, sat Tommy Acres and Little Deadman, the former looking at a soiled funny paper that he had picked up on the yard a short while ago, and the latter still sitting straight with his arms folded as though he had not heard Mr. Sanger's words.

He was a dark, frail, well-mannered boy of twelve, with sad blue-black eyes and long lashes.

His sentence was life for fatally shooting a baby brother while toying with a loaded shotgun. He had small, beautiful white hands that he never exposed unless it were an absolute necessity. Mankiller rarely missed an opportunity to tease him about his sensitiveness, and one stifling hot day last summer when he had charge of a gang in the corn fields near the river bottoms he had compelled Little Deadman to exhibit his hands to a pair of negro dormitory monitors, both vicious murderers, who had strolled down from the Coloured Department after breakfast and before turning in to pass the time of day. They had clownishly pawed his hands, made brutal soul-piercing remarks, and sensitive Little Deadman had fainted that night on his way in from the fields. Mr. Arnold had heard of it, demanded that Mankiller be put back on the line, but it wasn't long before Mr. Harrison had him off again.

Farming was the chief industry during the summer, and the State had under control by ownership and on crop-sharing basis, by lease and by rent, above seven hundred and forty-five acres. To cultivate these they reverted to pre-Civil-War-day methods, the white and coloured boys acting the role of

slaves. Flogging was a very common thing in the fields, never a summer day passing without some boys coming in "warmed up." In hoeing or plowing, picking beans or tomatoes, onions, potatoes and turnips or gathering corn, alfalfa, barley and wheat, woe betide the one who did not keep up with the fastest. He was beaten until he did. Runaways were awfully frequent then, sometimes groups of boys at a pre-arranged signal dropping their tools and taking it on the lam in as many different directions. Invariably they were caught, monitors, officers, farmers and dogs taking up the chase. . . . But off they went again.

Canning was the next industry and one that was proving to be of great value to the State, thirty-five thousand cans of farm products having been put up last year and sold. Ned blamed this zeal in canning as one of the reasons for the terrible assortment of food we were getting, and also blamed the money-making Prison Board and the system that it carried out as being the primary source of all that was rotten in the institution.

They had handed over to Mr. Arnold, a failing business man at the capital, the reins that the

Superintendents before him had held; and it was killing him, because he found that he couldn't steer Reformatory Procession in any other groove but the one that had been made for him.

Fifteen or twenty minutes from now morning school would let out, and after dinner for a short while the playroom would be filled, holding about sixty boys all told. There were that many in each division, three hundred odd being the population. The Fourth Division boys were not much taller nor older than the line leaders of ours, but because of the lack of space they had to be thrown in with the other three divisions, staying in the large playroom when not at work and sleeping in a wing of the big dormitory. Sometimes when boys in the little dormitory were caught trying to escape from it they were transferred to the Fourth Division to discourage any attempts on the part of the others.

The ages of those in the First, Second, and Third Divisions ranged from eighteen to thirty and over; and the majority of them were a bad influence for the little boys, firing their imaginations with tales of crime; or drawing pictures on paper and telling filthy stories about them; or making overtures.

Money was not allowed on one's person. But those fortunate enough to have someone sending it in to them either had it to their credit in the office or else held by some monitor or officer. The commissary sold a certain assortment of sweets that was very tempting to the little boys; and these, along with smoking and chewing, always in circulation among the older boys, were passed down for favors returned.

During the spring and winter months when school was in session, the hours were from 7:30 A.M. to 11 A.M. and from 1 P.M. to 4:30 P.M. giving each boy three-and-one-half hours schooling a day. The grades ran from the Primer Class up to the Eighth. But the greater part entered below the Fifth. Ned and his brother were the only boys in the Seventh and there was one afternoon boy, Turkey Buzzard, in the Eighth. Very often boys of eighteen years of age and over were received, who had never spent a day in school. The Second, Third and Fourth grades had an attendance of almost one hundred boys between them, varying in ages from ten to thirty.

Mrs. Lourie, a kind patient woman, was Princi-

pal. Her husband had the Third Division and their son Rex was a playmate of Frank Arnold's.

If any boy was caught talking or misbehaving in the dining-room, his name was taken without his being aware of it by Mr. Sanger who was the best educated among the officers; and on Saturday morning after breakfast the list was read by him, and those whose names were on it were marched to the bathroom and " rode the iron mule " while being flogged by Mr. Harrison or Mr. Leach. The latter, a left-hander, was considered the ace among " leather pourers," having acquired the knack of giving a certain twist to the descending strap so that the tongue of it cut into a boy's hide.

For the graver offenses, which were stealing, running away or talking about it, and sex perversion, a boy was put on the moanas' bench, besides getting a flogging in the classroom some night as an example to the others.

The moanas' bench deprived one of his recreation. It meant no sitting down for the boy at all during waking hours, except when eating his meals, attending school, or during Sunday Services. After work he had to stand up and face the wall whether

in the classroom at night or in the playroom during the day. This was in the winter months. But during the summer ones, after ten hours toil in the fields, the moanas had to break rock around the pile Paul and I had passed until it was time to go to bed. The period that a boy was kept on the bench depended on the gravity of his offense, runaways remaining on it the longest: between three and six months.

There had been another form of punishment to go along with all this, that Mr. Arnold had succeeded in abolishing, despite the objection of Mr. Harrison, who had been in the institution longer and of whose worth the Board was fully aware. This was the placarding of the boy with a wooden sign suspended by a string around his neck, so that there was one sign on his chest and one on his back, bearing the words: " Thief," " Liar," or " In Disgrace," depending upon the crime commited.

Ned had been on the moanas' bench more than once; and he was telling me about the time Lloyd Rollins, an auburn-haired boy of twenty, who reminded him of Josie's pony, he was so beautiful, and who had been discharged a month ago but was now in jail again, had taken seventy-five lashes for

lamming his fifth time, the last twenty-five lashes on his bare skin, and after every one smiled up with twisted lips at Mr. Harrison and Mr. Leach who were relieving each other — when the gong out in the yard sounded and he slipped his elbows off the sill.

" Mornin' school is over," he answered my question, casting a glance toward Mr. Sanger who was beginning to stir, " and it's the signal for the boys in the fields and on tasks to leave off and come in for dinner."

" One! " Mr. Sanger's shrill voice burst out as soon as the bell ceased tolling, putting an end to all the chattering and games.

We sat up with folded arms, our eyes on him as he withdrew his rickety legs from the stove's metal plate and placed a hand on the strap in his lap, preparatory to rising.

" Two! "

The command to stand, dropping our hands to our sides.

He started for the door with mincing steps, and from it, facing us, gave the final order.

"Three!"

We made a left turn and followed the line leader out, passing by Mr. Sanger waiting to close the playroom door behind Little Deadman, who next to Johnny Hamilton was the smallest boy in the school.

17

Officers and monitors were herding in squads of boys from all corners of the institution, and the yard echoing with their voices calling time seemed to have arrested the sun's attention overhead.

Down the walk, rounding the rock pile, came a score of laundry boys, two abreast, stepping along to Mr. Crane's vigorous voice:

"Hep, hep, hep hep hep — "

The lads on the tail end had a hard time keeping up with the strides the larger ones took, and half skipped, half ran after them.

Nor far behind Mr. Crane was Uncle Bodleigh, a gaunt farmer in a slouch hat, with his barn crew: they wore sheepskin coats.

"Hite — hite — hite — hite — "

Mr. Lourie had the shoe shop and warehouse. He called time gravely:

"Left — left — left — left — "

Mr. Leach and several monitors were bringing in a large field-gang from the direction of the Col-

oured Department. They carried tools on their shoulders as soldiers did muskets. Their feet stirred up dust in the road.

"Wan, two, three, fo'! Wan, two, three, fo'!" His tongue seemed to jerk the air with a twang, the way Ned had told me his hand jerked leather.

And, "Left, left, left right left! Left, left, left right left!" Mr. Sanger's womanish voice floated high above the others. He walked backwards and sideways and frontwards on the toes of his rickety legs, his knitted jersey in wrinkles by the play of his bosom, and his browless eyes sweeping our line and those of other officers, too, as if he were calling time for them. At the foot of the schoolroom steps he paused to see how the pupils coming out of it were doing.

The ten long tables were all set; and I marched into the dining-hall between Horsethief and Ned, glancing out of the corner of my eye at Aunt Lizzie, who leaned against a window behind the steam tables with her arms folded, her lips puckered, and an abstracted look in her dark rheumy eyes.

"She gets more upset at feedin' time than we do,"

Ned whispered in my ear as we filed slowly by her. "But she ain't so black in the face this noon."

I hoped that this was a good sign, being nearly famished from missing breakfast and taking a bath.

Chipmunk, a lean and lively fellow, with the small gray face of an old man and the restless eyes of a mouse, led the line up the aisle to the nearest table on the left; and we began filling it up, stepping over the benches, and sitting down close to one another.

Our shining tin plates, before which we had clasped our hands, were turned upside down. Three pieces of corn-bread were before each one. A cup full of milk, and a knife, fork, and spoon on either side of it. In the center of the table were two large bowls with ladles in them, and another bowl on each end. All four were steaming. Six pitchers of water were lined between the bowls.

A dining-room boy in a white apron was stationed at the head and foot of each table. Several more loitered in the aisles to watch that no places were left open; and that every one took his seat as he filed in, instead of waiting to let some go by or

sneaking ahead of others in order to get somewhere near the bowls.

We were the first in, but a few minutes later the hall was swarming with those coming behind, officers and monitors interspersed.

Mr. Sanger had paused just outside the door to see that each boy removed his cap the moment he reached it and that order was kept on their way in.

"— Step lively there Silas Hopper — quit crowding him Enoch Byrant — Cow Herder wipe that snicker off your face — you too Jimmie Green! "

18

I left the table hungry. So did most of the others. There wasn't much on it that was fit to eat: heavy, soggy corn-bread that looked on the inside as though rusty nails had been stuck through it; skimmed milk, that prevented any one who couldn't go it from drinking water until he was through with his plate, so that his filled cup could be emptied; water-soaked potatoes; stewed onions; revolting, indigestible liver; and butter beans with prize pieces of pork floating about.

The last dish got the biggest play but there wasn't enough to go around. Hog Jaw, a boy with a heavy, angular head, deep-set hazel eyes, a snub nose and sagging jaw, who ladled it out from the bowl on our table took enough for six to begin with, and those who could get their plates up to him before it was all gone also got a good spread, as he was in a hurry to start eating. I could almost count how many beans were returned to me and the one piece of pork awarded, I forked out and dropped into

Ned's plate. He evidently thought it was a grand gesture on my part and tried to return it with a frown, but I held my pan away and got a rap on the head from someone walking in the aisle behind me. Little Deadman, whose head barely reached above the table, was sitting at the tail end near the bowl of stewed onions and didn't get a bean; neither did Smithy, an unbelievably thin boy with a game leg and a tapeworm, who had come in a few moments after the rest, having to limp up from the shoe shop.

Aunt Lizzie stood near the steam tables waiting to refill the bowls that her dining-room crew brought back and looking pretty miserable because there was very little call for seconds on anything but butter beans. The waiters had to return shaking their empty bowls in mid-air for all to see.

Opposite us the five tables of larger boys weren't faring very well, either, and not a few of them cast glittering eyes our way, as though they believed we would make juicy morsels ourselves.

Mr. Sanger minced up and down the main aisle that led to the office, with a notebook and pencil in

his hand and his spectacled bird's head twisting in all directions.

The whipping specialist, Mr. Leach, a tall thin man, with a crooked neck, long sallow face, bloodshot eyes and tobacco-filled cheeks, sauntered around the tables on our side twirling his black leather strap. While Mankiller, a thick-set monitor, with heavy features, a flat head, beetling eyebrows and dark curly hair clustering about his forehead, did the same on the other side.

The rest of the officers and monitors leaning against walls or window-sills kept eyes and ears open also.

Not a boy dared complain — or even look as if he wanted to.

19

The schoolroom extended the entire length of the second floor. Mr. Arnold's door opened into it from the rear on the northeast; and the one leading upstairs to the big dormitory on the northwest. Between them was the main entrance that the steps in the yard brought one to. It cut through a small square classroom, partitioned off from another one. Whipping of the Moanas was done in the latter. They were lined up in the aisle outside and called in according to size, the littlest Moana first.

About one hundred and fifty desks, seven in a row, filled the portion ahead. A blackboard stretched clear across the front. Windows were on the sides.

Mrs. Lourie had her desk in the middle of the room, facing all the others. A few feet to the right of it was a piano and stool. On top of the piano were several stacks of song books. These were passed out every Friday night by Mr. Crane who

was choir master; and who assumed the responsibility for our behavior during Sunday Services.

Mrs. Lourie was a matronly woman with gray hair and calm blue eyes; and I was received by her with kindly interest when Ned brought me up the center aisle to where she was sitting, watching the boys enter and take their seats. She questioned me quietly, while Ned stood watching how I answered, as though a mentor's duties called for his doing so. Her brows knit in puzzlement when I told her that I was a grammar school graduate and she looked from me to him in concernment.

"You'd better ask Mrs. Arnold to come in, Ned, I'm afraid we haven't a teacher for this boy."

"Yes, Mam," — and while the pupils were getting settled in their seats and Ned was rapping on Mrs. Arnold's door, she told me as I waited beside her desk with my cap in my hand, that there were three teachers in the school who divided the grades between them, she taking the first, second and third; Mrs. Follis the next three; and Miss Ezell the seventh and eighth. "— But I'm sure that Miss Ezell has never taught high school subjects," she concluded, as Ned returned preceding a tall, strong-

looking woman who nodded pleasantly to several boys that passed her on their way in, " and so we'll have to see what can be done."

Mrs. Arnold regarded me thoughtfully while listening to Mrs. Lourie. She had a large, beautiful dark face, and deep, limpid blue eyes with long lashes. Her hair was black, long and thick, and she carried herself with a light dignity.

" I think we'll have to ask Sue to teach him," I heard her say to Mrs. Lourie in a deep, contralto voice, while they both stood, considering what was to be done with me. " Mr. Arnold is going into the capital to meet her tonight, and we can have her start in next Monday."

Mrs. Lourie slowly nodded her portly head and they talked a little longer about Sue, who was Mr. Arnold's eldest daughter. She'd been away attending a teachers' college, but had to come in now for " family " reasons to teach Sunday School and Grade.

" I heered from Paul that she was comin'," Ned imparted to me in a whisper, as we walked across the room in view of the curious assortment of large and small heads, to his teacher, Miss Ezell, a young

woman with bright eyes and a high bosom, who was to have care of me for several afternoons. " He said it almost broke Mr. Arnold's heart to have to take her out of school."

I was given a seat behind Turkey Buzzard, a twenty-five-year-old, lanky Second Division boy whose face did not please me. It was round, freckled, mouse-eyed, and overloaded with fat. He had big ears, and a thick neck which was also freckled, a pin head covered with bright red hair that stood up in a bunch, and that seemed to be looking down haughtily at the curly red locks belonging to Paul, who sat two seats ahead and was passing a note across the aisle to his fair-haired brother Ned.

Mrs. Lourie struck a finger-bell and school began with the entire classroom watching her lips and reciting aloud with her the Twenty-third Psalm and the Lord's Prayer. It ended with the gong in the yard.

20

After a supper that consisted of the leave-overs from dinner, with the exception of white bread substituted for corn and the addition of thick black syrup, one small square of butter each — that usually went into a mixture with the syrup for a bread-smear — and sickly sweetened stewed prunes, we were sent up to the schoolroom again where it was the custom for all five divisions to sit until the bed-time bell.

The First Division took their seats on the Arnolds' end, the Fifth Division on the Dormitory end, and the other three in between.

Paul had returned to the office after supper to get the mail and give it to Mr. Sanger; and Mr. Sanger now stood in front of Mrs. Lourie's desk, going through the packet just out of curiosity before distributing it, to see how many envelopes had been marked by the bookkeeper informing the boys that money was in the office for them.

Mr. Leach slouched on the piano stool with his

back to the piano, his elbows on it, one long leg over the other, and his left hand winding and unwinding the black strap around his forefinger, talking to a sunken-chested six-foot monitor with a long nose and high cheek bones — Duckbill — who leaned against the piano looking very stern and rather pale, his pallor being intensified by his coal black hair and dark eyebrows. Ned said he could run like a deer. More than one boy who thought he had a good start had been caught and returned by him.

And sitting in an armchair against the wall, away on the other end, his beetling brows conspicuous, was Mankiller hawk-eyeing the moanas. They were facing the blackboard with hands straight down to their sides, heels and toes together, and heads up. Five of them were on the bench: Johnny Hamilton, a boy of eleven, Train Hater, fourteen, Happy Phelps, fourteen, " Cocky " Fobush, sixteen, and Ossie Prater, a raw-boned mountaineer of thirty. The last was so much taller and more developed than the others it looked as though he was standing in the midst of his family.

Ned and I sat together at a desk in the second to the last row on our side, talking about them.

Johnny, a furtive and sneaky little fat boy with a fresh face and dancing blue eyes, was on the bench for stealing a pound of butter from the Commissary; and Ossie Prater for giving him a sack of Durham and three chocolate bars for it.

Cocky Fobush had run away and returned a week later of his own accord, more dead than alive, but it made no difference.

He was an ill-natured, meddlesome boy with blinking, half-blind eyes, always complaining of something or running to snitch on the other boys. Very little work could be got out of him because of his physical condition: he had the seven year itch. The bad-smelling yellow salve that he kept in a little round tin and rubbed over his body every night, didn't do much good because he just couldn't keep from continually scratching. Even Mankiller finally let him have his own way after trying to cure him with strap-medicine every time he caught him scratching himself on the moanas' bench. They had sent him to the Reformatory because he was a de-

pendent and neglected child,* and, upon his escape from a rented farm where he'd been water boy to a gang of teamsters, no one had bothered looking for him, the authorities not even giving the alarm.

Train Hater had been caught again with a pocketful of stones. He was a crazy little boy, with a dark mean face and slanting greenish eyes, whose parents had been killed in a buggy at a railroad crossing, leaving him alone in the world. A neighboring farmer had adopted him, but a short time later he was sentenced for attempting to wreck a train in revenge by dragging ties across the track and piling them in its path. Now, whenever a train rushed by and he was on the yard, he made for it with whatever he could lay his hands upon.

Happy Phelps was a soft-bodied, weak-natured boy, large for his age, with a round and puffy face, small gray eyes, and lips that were always parted in a smile. The First Division boy with whom he had gotten into trouble had lammed before moanas' whipping night and so had two coming to him upon his return. But Happy had already received his and so had it off his mind.

* There were several such there.

The others were to be whipped tonight along with the runaways, Frank Chaney and Frank LaRue, just as soon as Chock Norton brought them in: Mr. Harrison had been heard to ask Mr. Leach how his pitching arm was feeling today and been answered:

"Good as it all'us is, I reckon."

And Mr. Leach was telling Duckbill now, as he wound and unwound his strap that: "It ortn't t' be more'n half hour 'fore he brings 'em in han'-cuffed."

The whole classroom was buzzing about it, the smaller boys whispering rapidly with excited gestures, making speculations on how many lashes would be given each moana, and whether or not this one or that one would take it like a man.

"I'll bet'cha an agate little ole Johnny Hamilton don't git but three licks," Horsethief behind us was saying to Froghunter, "an' 'nother one that Frank LaRue won't do nothin' but grunt!"

"Hope Cocky's made to pull his britches down," Peggy said, across the way, to Ivy. "Stooled on me las' Sunday for stealin' the square o' butter off'n his plate."

"Mr. Arnold's goin' into the capital for his

daughter, Sue, tonight," Paul ahead to Moonface, a boy with a round, unlined, expressionless face, whom Aunt Lizzie called Frank Goodman.

"He ain't never to be catched aroun' here, moanas' whippin' night," Ned Tanner to me. "His face went whiter'n chalk the first time Mr. Harrison had him in as a guest; and Mr. Harrison, smilin' into his white whiskers, fetched him a glass of water and watched him down it; and Mr. Arnold came nigh onto losin' his job shortly after for tryin' to put a stop to whippin's."

"Yonder comes Jo' an' Frank Arnold now," Smithy, the boy with the tapeworm, said to Little Deadman. He had had an eye on the Arnolds' door ever since taking his seat.

For a moment the moanas and their fate were forgotten and I turned my head to see little Jo' about whose goodness I had heard from every one with whom I had come into contact during the day.

She was passing by the larger boys, on her way to us, holding her brother Frank's hand. Frank was a thin-bodied and thin-faced lad of thirteen with light wavy hair, brown eyes and a genial smile, dressed in short trousers and a white shirt; Jo' a

chubby, five-year-old girl as radiantly beautiful as her mother. She only seemed to be built on a smaller plan. Her little head was covered with black curls and her great dark blue eyes looked about at the big boys who were turning around and calling after her, with a calmness that was not at all childish. She wore bloomers, a short blue dress with a tiny white sweater over it, and held her free hand covered over something in the pocket of the sweater.

She dropped Frank's hand when he paused to talk to Stephen Sassbury and Turnip Head, Fourth Division boys who sat together in a back seat and had accosted him, and made her way, a little unsteadily on her legs, to the front desk in the very last row, where Smithy and Little Deadman were sitting, despite the temptations that were thrown in her path by the others she passed in the aisles.

"Come 'ere Jo', I wanna show you somethin'!"

"Hey, Jo' Arnold, lookit this paper pigeon."

"Here's a whistle made out'n a soup bone, Jo'."

"Didja tell Mrs. Arnold 'bout me gettin' a whippin', Jo'?"

"Where's my sangwich, Jo', huh?"

"Jo', don't give that little ole no-account boy nothin', fetch it 'ere."

Smithy fairly snatched whatever it was wrapped in tissue paper that she pulled out of her pocket with great care, as if he were afraid it would evaporate if exposed to the air for longer than a moment. He was thin to emaciation and his eyes shone through dark, shadowy rings.

"Thanky, Jo' A'nold."

"Welcome, 'mitty."

Mr. Leach who had left off talking to Duckbill to turn his crooked neck and watch her come down this way with his red, watery eyes, shifted his tobacco to one side and tried to coax her to him, saying he had something to tell her, but she shook her curly head and pouted and left Smithy eating, to walk back a few desks to Ned and me, reaching us just as Mr. Leach raised his strap to attract her brother Frank's attention. He was aided by several boys in the nearby rows, as though they were planted there for relays: "Hey, Frank, Mr. Leach wants you." "Mr. Leach's callin' you-all, Frank."

"Who is 'oo?" she lisped, after crawling up into Ned's lap and encircling his neck with a

chubby arm. Her big blue eyes were filled with curiosity, and I patted her curly head and told her that I was a new boy and also my name, not however without a little embarrassment.

Ned held her close to his breast, his face as beautified as when he had asked me proudly what I thought of his girl, and the lads about were gazing from her to him with wistful and envious eyes.

"What is 'oo — ?" She started to slowly form another question, staring me straight in the face to my discomfort, when her brother, Frank, came over and interrupted in a gentle voice that reminded me of Mr. Arnold's. "Come on Jo', Mr. Leach says this is moanas' whipping night."

"No — no — " she shook her curls and buried her head on Ned's shoulder, close to mine.

"Yes, Jo', we have to, come on now," Frank smiled and winked an eye at me.

"You'd better, Jo'," I put in, and Ned also: "Mr. Sanger'll sit us little ole boys up if you don't, Jo'; watch and see. He's lookin' over this way now."

"And I'll bet that's dad honking downstairs," Frank wound up in haste, his thin cheeks colouring,

as a machine was heard in the back yard. "Let's hurry on and see if Sue came home, Jo'."

She jerked her head around, holding out her arms for him to take her.

And, as we watched Frank sweep her by row after row, Ned remarked quietly that he hoped Mr. Arnold'd never throw up his job as long as he done time here, because seeing Jo' in the classroom every night was the only diversion the boys ever had to look forward to, except a few hours in the yard on Saturday and Sunday afternoons.

21

"One!"

Mr. Harrison's voice suddenly burst in on us from behind, electrifying the room so that every boy in it sat rigidly up with his hands clasped on the desk.

"Stan' straight thar Cocky, quit shakin' those knees!" Mankiller demanded in a high, nasal pitch, not in tune with his heavy features, as he rose from his chair, his beetling brows moving.

"Moanas — 'bout face!" Mr. Harrison again in his cruel studied voice, from the classroom door. "For'ard march, an' back here."

Johnny led them, startle-eyed and with his face as red as an apple, up an aisle between two rows of tall boys. Cocky was ashen-faced — there was a bump on his forehead; Train Hater trembled; and Ossie Prater sneered. Mankiller brought up the rear. Happy Phelps remained behind.

"A' right, Mr. Leach, let's go."

Mr. Leach went, coolly biting a fresh chew off a

plug, craning his crooked neck, and pulling out a blue bandanna handkerchief to wipe his purple-veined nose with now, and later to knot about the wrist of his whipping hand, for a reason unknown to any one but himself. There was a story current among us, however, that he started doing it since the night he walked in from town red-eyed drunk, raving that his left hand had been screaming its bloody head off all along the road.

Mr. Sanger sat on Mrs. Lourie's desk with his rickety legs clear off the floor, several letters in his hand that had not yet been passed out, and his fuzzy, spectacled bird's head sweeping all over the classroom. Duckbill had instituted himself in Mankiller's place, near the armchair, his stern eyes on Happy Phelps . . . all was quiet; oppressively so. I could hear Ned breathing beside me.

" Find out what's keepin' Chock Norton an' them thar runaways so long in the dinin' room! " Mr. Harrison was on the back porch calling down to someone in the yard.

" Yonder they come," " On their way up," " Bringin' 'em," several voices chorused in return, among them Mr. Crane's and Uncle Bodleigh's.

A moment later feet shuffled in.

" Take places on the tail end o' that line thar, we'll 'tend to you-all last — git in here, Johnny Hamilton! "

The classroom door was banged. The whole building and I, too, seemed to vibrate from it.

" Down on your knees, now, and hug that stool! "

Johnny started whimpering on his way down: " Please let me off this time, Mr. Harrison, I won't do it any more."

There was a sound like a swimmer taking a belly-whopper off a diving board. A chill ran over me and my breath stopped. Johnny was screaming in a high falsetto. " Mr. Harrison! Mr. Harrison! I won't do it any more! Oh, Mr. Harrison I won't do it any more! "

And after another lash: " Oh, Lordy I won't do it any more! Jesus have mercy, I won't do it any more! "

" I hardly believe you will either, my boy, when you see what happens to the rest. Let him up, Mr. Leach. Quit that snifflin', boy."

Johnny came out sobbing, his head buried in his arms, and took his place beside Happy. Ossie

Prater was called in next, out of turn, Mr. Harrison being troubled by the contemptuous sneer still on his face. He was given twelve lashes. Between them I could hear nothing but the throbbing of my heart.

"Let him up, Mr. Leach! He ain't got no feelin', no use wastin' your arm on him. Save it fo' the runaways."

Train Hater had to be held on the stool by Chock and Mankiller. He took four lashes making noises like a deaf and dumb man. He was very nearly the cause of someone else getting a whipping also, for Mr. Sanger caught a boy with his head slightly turned:

"Get that mug around here, Floyd Hawkins, or I'll send you back this minute for a sample, if you're so interested in it!"

And then came Cocky Fobush. Eighteen lashes. Screaming at the top of his dreadfully thin, ear-piercing voice with every lash:

"Oh, Mary, Mother of Jesus have mercy!"

"Hug that stool. Grab hold of him thar Chock! John! Give him a twister Mr. Leach! Another'n!"

"Mary! Mary! Mother of Jesus!"

"Pour it on thick, Mr. Leach! You ain't half tryin'!"

"Oh! oh! oh! . . ."

"It ain't nothin' to what the nigger boys get," Ned dared to whisper to me through clenched teeth, when Cocky was let up so hoarse from screaming, his moans were hardly audible. "They have to take 'em with their pants down."

Frank Chaney, a Third Division boy, was the surprise of the party, taking thirty-three lashes like a man. I could almost feel him grinding his teeth and holding his body taut, and counted every lash as though my very life depended upon it. All the other seated boys must have been doing the same. The fall of the strap became monotonous after a while, it sounding as though someone were beating a carpet. Mr. Harrison seemed puzzled although Mr. Leach was working hard, puffing with every lash.

"Feel his breeches thar, Chock, see if any paddin's in 'em?"

"Naw."

"Sure?"

"Naw."

"Hm."

Their voices were very calm, and neither the sound of them, the scraping of the stool as Chaney squirmed upon it, nor the sneezing of Mr. Sanger and hiccuping of Johnny Hamilton broke the memorable stillness of that enormous classroom in which three hundred men and boys were sitting rigidly with their hands clasped on the desks before them. . . .

Frank LaRue failed to grunt as Horse Thief offered to wager, but kept silent until the nineteenth lash and then let out several prolonged howls * that sent chills up my spine but must have appeased Mr. Harrison for: "It'll do Mr. Leach! We've got a good stoppin'-off place now until next moanas' whippin' night."

Five minutes later all the moanas were on the bench with the exception of Cocky Fobush, who had been taken by Chock Norton to the bathroom for a wash. . . .

Mr. Harrison had paraded up and down before us several times, with his hands behind his back, his mustache trembling, and a green fire burning in his

* Between the fifteenth and twentieth lash a boy, with very rare exceptions, "went numb" and Frank must have become alarmed at the state he found himself in.

rabbit-like eyes, as though he were contemplating lining us all up to be whipped.* . . .

After he had stalked off, Mr. Sanger gave us permission to talk, but there didn't seem to be anything to talk about, and the whole room was in an awkward silence until the bedtime gong.

* An entire Division, the Fourth, were once given three lashes apiece in the bathroom, for breaking rank on the yard before their officer called for them to do so.

22

" One! " Mr. Sanger ordered his division, while the other boys started removing their shoes that were left in the schoolroom overnight to make one think twice before attempting a dormitory lam.

We turned sideways in our seats.

" Two."

We stood.

" Three."

And moved up the aisles, falling in row by row, to follow our line leader, Chipmunk, out.

" Catch the tail end, thar, Fifth Division moanas," Mankiller called to the three of them on the bench, as we were filing through the little classroom.

In front of the kitchen Chipmunk halted, and the rest of us coming down the stairs closed in silently, two abreast.

The night was cold and littered with stars that the Almighty Lamp-Lighter had neglected to have polished before leaning out to imbed in our canopy.

On the kitchen porch stood the dark forms of Bert Keeler, a lanky monitor, with a dinner basket in his hand, who had charge of the little dormitory, Effie Secks, who had changed to overalls, and three other monitors whom I did not know. They were grouped together, watching us, and talking in undertones. Ned and several others had warned me not to make a retort if they passed any remarks about me on our way to the dormitory or I'd be cuffed around.

Near the bell-rope was the pigeon-toed night watchman who had rung it, standing with his lantern in his hand; and a short way off from him, the silhouette of a new arrival among the officers, Mr. Libby, who kept apart from the others, and about whom no opinion had as yet been formed.

Behind us around the dining-room and big playroom doors were several more officers, and one monitor, Duckbill, who was to march on the tail end with an arm on Train Hater's shoulder to hold him in check in case a train happened to signal or rush by.

Mr. Sanger was walking down the line counting

the pairs of boys. Before he was through the monitors on the porch had dispersed and closed in on either side of us.

The watchman and Mr. Sanger were the only officers to accompany our line, the rest having to be about until the final count was taken in the dormitories before they could call it a day. Mr. Sanger finally gave the order to proceed.

"All right, up in front! Left, left, left right, left! Left, left, left right, left!"

His shrill voice pierced the still night air and raised echoes; and the whole universe seemed to call time along with him.

"Left, left, left right, left! Left, left, left right, left!"

We turned the bend. The officers hanging around the administrative buildings were enveloped in the gloom of the night. Bracket lamps illuminated the large dormitory on the third floor, and also a ward in the hospital a half block ahead of us. We could see moving figures through the screens and windows of both. They looked like grotesque wall shadows that someone was casting with his hands.

At the Toilet, a halt was called by Mr. Sanger who followed it up with: "All right, Jockeys."

Five boys stepped out from different parts of the line to enter and emerge with a disinfected can in each hand. Paul was one of them and Chicken Driver another. The cans looked like water sprinklers without nozzles. The Jockeys carrying them formed a line of their own, walking a little to one side of the others.

We arrived at the entrance and slowed down. Mr. Sanger and Bert Keeler preceded the line leaders up, the former to take the lock off the door that he and the night watchman were the only ones supposed to have keys to.

Duckbill and the watchman paused on the walk outside; and the four remaining monitors bunched in the dark hallway at the foot of the narrow, wooden stairs, that creaked under the tread of those beginning to ascend. This was the gauntlet I had been told about, that we had to run through every night.

"Here's Hog Jaw."

"Tough meat."

"Need any chewin', Brownie?"

"How's Booty, Red?"

"You wanna lay off'n that pretty boy, Effie, he's my meat."

"Ha, ha! I'd fight fo' him myself, Dewey."

"Or his brother."

"Here's the new boy."

"Need any chewin', boy?"

"Or smokin'?"

"Or candy?"

"This is yo' 'nitiation night, boy."

"It sho' is, he, he!"

"If Bert don't git 'im, John or Chock will."

"Boy, you'd bettah keep an eye open."

"Don't you pay no heed, boy, get right to sleep."

"Wow! Yonder's Happy."

"An' Little Blackie."

"Motherless bastards!" Ned labelled them in an awful hissing voice, when we were a few steps from the Dormitory door. . . . And I was greatly startled and could hardly believe that the hiss came from one I had found to be so gentle.*

* My own reactions need not, nor could they, be recorded.

23

The Dormitory, a barnlike room with a low, blackened ceiling, aged and decayed wooden floor, walls that were hung with bracket lamps, and fourteen thick-screened windows, two in the rear, and six on each side, was an inescapable trap if it ever caught afire because the door was padlocked on the outside, leaving even the monitor out of luck. There'd been a time when it was keyed from the inside, but the monitor in charge then had been overpowered by a dozen boys who took it on the lam with the rest gazing on but afraid to join.

Thirty beds were in it, ranged in three rows. Twelve each on the south and north sides, the latter overlooking the barnyard, and six in the middle. Between them, two narrow aisles ran the length of the Dormitory, the one on the right leading to the anteroom that stunted the middle row. Into here was where the five Jockeys marched to leave their disinfected cans.

Mr. Sanger stood with his back to the small round stove just inside the door, that Keeler was

preparing to build a fire in. A table and chair were against the wall behind it. On the table his lunch bucket, a coffee pot, and several other articles.

Ned's bed was in the middle row, the fourth one from the stove. All six in this row were lined head on, so that the boys sleeping in them faced the front, while those on either side looked across at one another.

I was to share Ned's with him, his former partner Horsethief having been moved in with Robert Locket, who was sleeping alone across the way, to make room for me. There were a few more boys scattered over the Dormitory who slept by themselves.

When the Jockeys had come out and were standing in the aisle beside their beds with folded arms like the rest of us, Mr. Sanger rapped on a rail with his key-ring as a signal for all to drop on their knees and pray.

For the first time that I can remember my emotions were such that I found it impossible to do so; my heart was swelled with so much to tell God that I feared it would burst unless I got some relief; and I opened my mouth wide but not a word came

forth; and I felt like a boy suddenly struck dumb.

A second knock on the bed rail started us to our knees; and a third to undress.

I watched Ned who had caught my eye from the aisle on the other side, to see what he did with his clothes, and then followed suit: folding each article separately, piling them one atop the other, and finally stooping to shove them on the floor underneath the bed.

Next he lifted the pillow and pointed to the white cotton nightgown behind mine, while picking up his own.

When we were all under blankets Mr. Sanger turned on his heel and passed Bert Keeler, who was striking a match on the stove, without as much as a glance his way. He hadn't spoken one word to him since our arrival in the Dormitory and just stood watching our movements with his hands on his hips, his chest protruding, and a frozen expression on his fuzzy, womanish face.

A moment later we heard him snap the lock and tread carefully down the creaky steps as though in fear his rickety legs might give way on him in the dark.

24

Although I didn't intend to go to sleep at all that night, my mind obsessed by what I'd heard regarding Monitors that strove to bend a boy to their will during his first night in the dormitory, an achievement to gloat over and boast of among themselves later on, I dropped off shortly after Ned's voice got lost somewhere in the middle of a sentence and my own failed to resume our whispering, under-blanket conversation.

Scarcely more than a minute could have passed before I was awake again, a strange sense of terror creeping over me and routing the day's impressions that had not as yet become part of my consciousness. . . . Bert Keeler was standing over the stove shaking coal into it from a scuttle, and here and there flickered a wall light as though irritated by the shivery noise being made. . . . Ned was sound asleep with his back to me, his fair head on the edge of his pillow, and his arms under the blanket that was pulled clear up to his face, half

covering a small left ear. The flats of Chipmunk's long, narrow feet were visible through the bed rail across the aisle; and on the pillow ahead of me, lying exposed like a boulder, was Hog Jaw's heavy, angular head. Ivy Sullivan, the white-haired epileptic, who slept beside him, was entirely under cover.

Outside, the night watchman suddenly blew his police whistle and it seemed to split the air and my heart like a javelin. Keeler set down his scuttle, coal dust hovering over it, slid back the round iron plate along with its seated coffee pot, and started for a window to answer the signal, brushing off his hands on the way. He was a lean six-footer with a narrow, hatchet-like face, close-set eyes, bristling black hair, and a charcoal complexion, who looked a great deal like an Indian. He had been sentenced for highway robbery and assault with " intent to kill."

" Hite! Hite! " he cupped his sinewy hands and called through them in a deep, resonant voice, his long nose touching the screen. A pause, another blast, and he turned away. This one was challenged by Nubby, the hospital monitor: a heavy with four

fingers missing off his right hand and a double-jointed thumb left on it: "Hite! Hite!" Last came Pig Iron of the large dormitory whose granite-like body had earned him the nickname: "Hite! Hite!" . . . Meaning that the pigeon-toed watchman completing his hourly round that carried him over the entire institution, had found all well, and was off with his lantern to see if he could do so again.

Keeler back about the stove was holding his lunch bucket at a slant before his eyes and giving it a little shake to see what its contents were. I watched him with a sort of fascination; the thought flashing through me that this was a preliminary gesture: Ned, as my mentor, having told me that for what was usually put inside a bucket by the cook many a boy had let himself be sweet-talked: officers' cornbread, savory meat, and fried potatoes, dobies,* pie, and genuine milk.

As if to testify to the milk, a cow mooed and mooed in the barn while Keeler was taking a swipe of it and I was swallowing with him, so closely did I watch. . . . The spell was broken by a boy on the barnyard side climbing out of bed and snap-

* A round flat biscuit made of white flour.

ping his fingers as he stood up beside it. Keeler wiped his mouth with the back of the hand that held the tin cover, and then gave him permission to go without turning around to see who it was: "Hite."

The boy folded his arms and tiptoed past him on his way to the anteroom — Johnny Hamilton. The large eyes in his fat rosy-cheeked face were still red from the crying he had done, and the hem of his cotton nightgown dragged the floor. He had to kick with every step he took to clear his path. I was grateful for his company, and, when he neared, began shifting about in bed to attract his attention and show him that I was awake, too, as though his knowing it would stiffen my backbone and put my mind at ease.

When he returned and climbed into bed, Keeler was sitting behind the stove with his chair tilted back against the wall and one arm resting on the table. A funny paper was in his hands: the one Tommy Acres had picked up on the yard and carried to the playroom with him. . . . Another boy snapped. "Hite." He slept behind me and entered the anteroom before I could take a chance on bending my head back to see who this was. . . . For

awhile there was no sound save the varying notes of breathing made by the occupants of the surrounding beds, and these rose and fell in rhythmic regularity, some low, some loud. . . . Keeler turned his funny paper just as my eyes were becoming heavy.

He perused it carefully as though it were a document . . . now he had it high before his face . . . and held it there so long I felt sure he must have made himself a peephole in the center. . . . Snap. . . . No answer. . . . Snap. No answer. . . . I hoped to God he had fallen asleep so I could quit worrying; and the crazy thought came into my head of "hite"-ing now for him. . . . Snap! Snap! Snap! The funny paper rustled and slowly came down. He started folding it to return to his back overall pocket. He'd been awake all this time reading. Snap. . . . "Hite, boy." . . . Thumbsucker's toes barely touched the floor so great was his hurry coming down one aisle and up the other. His smoke-dried face appeared like a cloud straining to burst. . . "Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha ha ha ha! Ha ha ha!" Keeler slapped his knees and threw back his hatchet-like head. The funny paper he had read with a solemn face but this elicited a laugh.

His gaiety chilled me. . . . I drew a little closer to Ned. He had turned in his sleep as had several others and was muttering something. I wondered if it were his girl he was dreaming about when disturbed. His exquisitely carved white face and soft hair parted on the side made him look like a girl himself. Much more so than did his brother Paul. Both these boys had simple, natural and affectionate natures despite the fact that they had stolen a bicycle between them. They had no business in this barnlike room — in this Reformatory seemingly owned by officers with coarse and callous temperaments who ought to be doing time somewhere themselves, had they? . . . and neither had I . . . nor Thumbsucker . . . nor any of the rest in the Fifth Division . . . this world was topsy turvy and God — ooh! maybe the devil was the real one spinning it. . . . I grew more frightened than ever. . . . "Ned, Ned," I had to whisper, and touch and rouse him a few minutes later, my heart tugging at my insides like a frantic sailor at a rope. "I'm sure there's somebody coming up the stairs. Listen and you can hear them creaking."

" Go to sleep, new boy," he blinked and yawned and turned around to my despair, as though he hadn't heard my words but just happened to open his lids of his own accord and found me awake — our heads were touching immediately after, however, because I knew it could not be my imagination: the lock was being fumbled with.

" Damn, new boy."

" Ned you asked me — and promised if — "

Mankiller and another monitor stood on the threshold and I eyed them in frozen horror. They both wore black slouch hats and looked more lawlike in them than citizens attending a lynching party. Mankiller had the lock and a piece of twisted copper wire in his hand, a curl of contempt on his thick cruel lips, and a brown sheepskin coat that reached to the knees of his short, squat body; the other: a blue heavy sweater on his tall, muscular form, an imbecilic grin on his snub-nosed face with its owlish eyes and florid complexion, and a nest framed for the brim of his hat by tangles of black bushy hair. " Dewey Punter," Ned who was now wide-awake whispered. He was the monitor who alternated on dormitory duty with Keeler, as

Chock did with Pig Iron, Nubby alone constantly holding down a night job.

We watched Keeler greet them by raising the coffee pot off the stove, and their heads nod in assent. . . . Mankiller slipped the lock and wire in the slanting pocket of his sheepskin coat and Dewey Punter shut the door. . . . While Keeler poured the coffee at the table and Punter watched and talked to him, Mankiller stood at the stove, rubbing his hands over it and sweeping the Dormitory with the viscous eyes under his beetling brows; eyes that could match the brownish agates I had seen in Frog Hunter's hand. A coldness emanated from him. He was terrifying. I squinted my eyes for fear they'd be seen open and prayed that Ned whose breath I felt on my face was doing the same. . . .

They drank their coffee standing around the stove, Keeler from a cup, Punter a fruit jar, and Mankiller a square tin can. Conversation was carried on in low voices.

"Whar's batty ole whiskers?"

"Playin' cards an' drinkin' corn with Leach an' Chock and ole man Randall."

"Time you-all got, Bert?"

"Wait'll I see."

"Nex' after you on the jokes, Bert."

"Done promised 'em to Half Pint, Dewey."

"Tell 'im to save 'em fur me."

"Two minutes yonder side o' the half hour, John."

"This'n says six."

"Better set it back, John, Bert's got his'n tickin' along with Jerry's."

"Head on head with 'im las' whistle."

"Jes seen his lantern movin' through the warehouse 'fore comin' up."

"Bes' watchman ez ever I seed."

"Ain't nary 'nother'n like 'im."

"He — He."

"Passes through Refo'm School parish at night like he were hits blind ploddin' ghost."

"Orter be put in harness 'longside o' Mr. A'nold."

"Mr. A'nold ain't pullin' much longer."

"I'll say."

"Booze's breakin' his back."

"Booze and whiskers tryin' to beat'm out'n his job."

"Whiskers ain't the only 'n."

"How come?"

"Fuzzy's tryin' to get a word in sideways for it, too."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He, he! Damn! Wouldn't he make a good 'n, now?"

"Take Tom right off'n the line an' put Bert back, the very first thing."

"How come, Bert, he, he, he."

"Shoo! I ain't playin' that."

"Ho, ho, ho, ho!"

"He, he, he!"

Pause.

"Come ag'in, Bert."

"Comin'. . . . How about another'n for you, Dewey, hold yer glass over this a-way."

"Naw, I'm warmed up a-plenty; feel like goin' now."

"Ain't been up in how long, Dewey, ha, ha!"

"Was up Sunday 'fore las' with Chock an' Blackie."

"Yeah."

"Blackie an' Griffin were up night 'fore las'."

"Damn, Bert, you oughta start chargin', ho, ho!"

"Ha, ha."

"He, he, he!" Chalk this 'n down fo' me, Bert."

Punter shook his bushy head as he set his jar on the table, still laughing, his owlish eyes screwed up, and his shoulder heaving, to squeeze Keeler's arm in a comradely manner and step by him to one of the two beds the latter had stood between when answering the signal. Brownie slept in it: a bronze-faced boy with curly, golden hair and large brown eyes, who worked in the officers' dining-room, walked behind Hog Jaw in line, was terribly handy with his fists but weaker in other ways, and sometimes watched for the monitors at night, rousing them to answer their whistles.

Punter sat down on the bed facing the boy and tickled his chin to awaken him. . . . Mankiller started asking questions. . . . I was paralyzed by what I had seen and heard and continued seeing and hearing in a daze, the light from the bracket lamps shimmering in my soul. . . . Punter was bending over and whispering to Brownie. . . . Mankiller listening to Keeler, both gazing down the

middle row. . . . Brownie was sitting up, rubbing sleep from his eyes. Mankiller setting down his tin. Brownie grumbling a good-natured, "Aw right," and Mankiller asking a nasal, "What bed?" Mankiller about to take a step forward and nettled by Punter arising from Brownie's bed. Punter passing Mankiller and exchanging smirks, Brownie following the former as docile as a lamb. Mankiller half turning to make an obscene remark to Keeler about Brownie's nightgowned body, through the side of his thick-lipped mouth. Punter and Brownie out of sight. Mankiller two beds away like a beetling-browed creature stepping from the pages of a Tarzan book. Ned poking and poking and whispering at me. The whites of Mankiller's viscous eyes flashing. My heart in my mouth and the blood thumping in my eardrums. The sudden braying of a mule apparently lifting me clear over Ned's body to the aisle on his side of the bed. And upon contact with the floor: "Don't touch me! Don't touch me! Don't you dare to touch me!" I burst out trembling from head to foot with emotion. "Mama! Mama!"

Mankiller wheeled. Keeler came running, his

hand feeling for the strap in his back pocket. Boys stirred on all sides; some sitting up. Mankiller was almost at the door, Punter hastening from the anteroom after him . . . and the entire awakened Dormitory, including Brownie standing in the anteroom entrance, began taking up my part by hissing and shouting, "Wolves! Wolves! Wolves!"

Keeler hopped around like a kangaroo from this bed to that and this aisle to that abating the feverish excitement with threats of administering strap medicine.

"Git in bed, brat!" he whistled through his teeth, when he came to where I was still standing, quivering, and seeming to make the bed rail I had a hold of and Ned's white upturned face quiver with me, "You-all did plenty o' damage fur one night!"

And he helped me in by giving me a powerful crack across the face with the palm of his hand that made everything turn black before my eyes. . . .

"Hite! Hite! . . . Hite! . . . Hite!" the monitors were answering the whistle . . . no lams had been made. . . . The vigil was being kept . . . and all was well in the Reformatory.

25

At daybreak the barnyard roosters crowing for the watchman to turn us out of bed awoke me with a splitting headache and the notion that I was being suffocated. A vile smell pervaded the whole Dormitory: it came from the anteroom where the buckets were kept. I covered my head with the blanket. Ned's was already under. I thought of a German gas-mask I had seen in the window display of a Cincinnati bank and wished it were here with me now.

The rising-bell tongued clangorous notes up from the yard to draw back our blankets in their wake.

I winced at the memory of what had occurred the preceding night, as I sat dressing on my side of the bed, the object of many a boy's gaze. Keeler sauntered up with his hands in his back pockets, while I was down on the floor lacing my shoes, to touch me with his foot and maliciously inform me, as I kept my head lowered, that he had decided to take Chicken Driver off the Jockey line and put me

on in his place; and, for all that he knew I'd stay on it as long as he had the Dormitory instead of being relieved at the end of a week as was supposed to be the custom.

"— An' little ole boy jes' go 'head an' let me hear 'bout you-all doin' some stoolin' — better teach him, Ned Tanner, whar his tongue's apt to get him, if you're doin' his mentorin'."

There was not the vaguest auspice conveyed to me in his voice that stooling might result in any harm to him or to the others; merely the insinuation that it would cause them a little annoyance.

I turned sick at the stomach and thought several times that I'd have to stop and vomit as I walked down the steps in the Jockey line with a reeking can in each hand. The raw morning air offered no relief, but made my eyes swim instead. We carefully set the buckets down, under Thumbsucker's rigid supervision, on the cement floor inside the Toilet: a dark, square room with a long wooden trough on three sides of it.

We went back to join the Division in the bathroom; and after a few moments in there, we were all bundled out to make room for the other Four

marching in pairs down the walk. . . . They used the same towels, tooth-brushes, and combs that we did, and, the next time, we'd have to use the same as they. Towels were changed three times a week; brushes and combs when the former wore out and the latter lost most of their teeth.

"Left, left, left right, left! Left, left, left right, left." Mr. Sanger, the fuzzy-face ogre, was driving us into the dining-room once more.

And, as we turned the bend, in view of the railroad track, a passenger train glided swiftly by like an elderly horrified woman with her gray hair streaming in the wind.

26

After breakfast — the best meal we'd had: mush, white bread, the smear, and weak coffee; but that was spoiled for me because of my headache — the morning-school boys went up to the classroom, and every one else was lined on the walk between the rock pile and little playroom to face Mr. Harrison, who stood near the bell, flanked by officers and monitors, waiting to call out Detail in his slow, drawling voice.

"Sick, lame an' la-zy bo-ys," he began, opening his mouth so wide his mustache filled up his nose.

Peggy, Smithy, Ivy, and Johnny in our Division and a dozen or so in the others took one step forward, their hands behind their backs. I did not because Ned had warned me in the bathroom, when I suggested the hospital for my headache, that all Miss Mary would give me for that was a great big dose of salts.

Mr. Harrison, who wore an elegant fall coat, tan gloves, a dark felt hat and had a typewritten sheet

of paper in his hands, as if he had just arrived from breakfasting at the capital, passed his rabbit-like eyes curiously down the line of advanced boys and opened them wide at Johnny Hamilton.

"Hm, boy, there ain't nothin' the matter with that butt o' you'n again? Gi — "

"Yes sir, yes sir, Mr. Harrison, yes sir, the skin is broken, I can't sit down," Johnny testified all in one breath as though he were pleading a cause other than his own, and the evidence was too important to be dismissed.

"Hm! " Mr. Harrison elevated his bushy eyebrows as though unconvinced; and then consulted himself about it: "Two licks? Ought to be toughe'n that by now? "

"Yes sir," Johnny agreed with him.

"Take 'em over, Pete." He waved the gloved hand with the paper in it. And added while it was still raised, frowning down at Johnny with tilted head: "Li'l ole boy, doan never try lammin' on me, you hear? 'cause it'll be too bad if you do."

"Yes sir."

Duckbill started across the lawn toward the hospital with the sick, lame and lazy line.

Mr. Harrison's nostrils and mustache quivered and he continued.

"Laundry and Blacksmith shop bo-oys, one step fo'wa'd, right face, hite." Their officer and monitor went along.

"Kitchen an' dinin'-room bo-oys fo'wa'd, left face, hite. . . . Hospital, toilet, ba'n ya'd, shoe shop, tailah shop, and ca'pentah shop, do'matory an' wa'house bo-oys, step fo'wa'd, right an' left, hite." . . . About fifty remained and as we closed up the gaps at his order, he studied the sheet: a daily list of the boys each department required to fill the places of those escaped, released, sick, or taken off their jobs for some reason or other.

He stalked over to our end first to start picking them out. Frog Hunter went to Aunt Lizzie; Ned and myself to Mrs. Randall, who had the dormitories.

Mrs. Randall was in the officers' dining-room gossiping with Mrs. Sanger about their husbands; and Eddy Easel, a Fourth Division lad with a pleasant disposition, who was considered the best marble shooter in the school, met us in the top hallway where he'd been planted to give the jiggers for the

boys taking advantage of Mrs. Randall's momentary absence by gathering around the stove in the Third Division wing for a smoke.

"Go right on in, Ned, an' new boy, an' get some while the gettin's good."

"Aw right."

We left him leaning over the banister and entered. The main dormitory was a sea of beds; and the walls were bracketed with lamps. One large Anteroom served for all four Divisions. It was over the office and reached by an aisle some eight feet wide that ran north and south through the middle of the dormitory and had another aisle of the same width crossing it. This last, the one we stepped into upon opening the door, led from wing to wing. The Fourth was over the Arnolds' and the Third in the other direction. Each had a night monitor in it. They were under orders from Chock or Pig Iron.

No fire was built in the stove the five boys were around and they carefully blew their smoke into it after every inhale.

When we had joined them and exchanged greetings, Possum, whose name suited him to a nicety, was delegated to go to a far corner of the wing and

get us the makings from a tin can hidden in the rent of a mattress there.

Ned rolled cigarettes for both and told me to watch how he did it. The tobacco, cornsilk, was practically tasteless, but seemed to be relished by all of us as though it were the best brand made.

"This'll get it."

"I'll say."

"Talk 'bout havin' a gravy train, man, man."

"Ned, I wouldn't swap jobs with yo' brother Paul, himself."

"Take a draw on this'n, Ned, I got a little Du'ham mixed in with it."

"I'll say."

"Now you, new boy."

"Uh-huh, it sure tastes like it."

"Where did you-all get it, Dude?"

"Ain't no tellin', Ned."

"He's sittin' pretty, Ned."

"Go wan, li'l ole boy, now!"

"Who give you-all the las' sack, Dude?"

"Time for another'n ain't it, Dude?"

"Man, she's nigh ole 'nough to be yo' granmaw."

"Dude ain't keerin'."

"He's sittin' purty."

"Ain't got but a short time left nohow."

"I jes' heerd 'bout 'nough out'n you-all, now!"

"Dude's courtin' a woman an' the husban' doan' know,
Her name is Mrs. Randall an' she looks like a crow.
She caught Mr. Randall one pay-day with a high yaller wench.
So if he catches 'em now, Dude won't make the moanas' bench."

This was being chanted by Possum and another boy of the Fifth to the tune of Steamboat Bill, and the other two joined in the chorus:

"Young Dude Russell got hisself an ol' woman
An' ol' lady Randall had a cravin' fo' a man.
Young Dude Russell got hisself an ol' woman
An' ole lady Randall won herself a young man."

Eddie Easel rushed in to give the jiggers as they started on another verse and Dude Russell, a lad of

the Fourth with a military carriage and flashing black eyes, was taking their measure as though challenging all four to do battle at the same time.

Mrs. Randall came in to find them paired off making beds; and she started Ned and me by helping us with our first. A tall, pallid, thin-lipped woman in gray with a parrot nose and dark circles under her eyes. Her dress was faded and worn; her shoes down at the heel and missing several buttons. Ned was acquainted with her, however, and claimed that she was a good scout despite her slatternly appearance and predilection for Dude Russell . . . and I more than agreed with him when she let us kill time in the little boys' dormitory, where we wound up our work, instead of sending us to the playroom to sit with Mr. Sanger until dinner.

27

We had community singing the following night, and Mr. Crane, leading us, made up for the officers and monitors who presented him the classroom for the occasion and then vacated themselves.

His wife played the piano. The song books kept on it were passed out by him, as far as they would go, to those knowing how to read. The rest sang or tried to sing from memory.

Jo' and Frank and Rex Lourie, the latter a lad of Frank's age, delicate, freckled, and sandy-haired, came in after the first song to take a seat near the piano and help. When Mr. Crane was over on the other end some of the little boys began pestering Jo' by calling her, merely to be doing so, but she shook her curly locks, and Frank, as though to apologize, turned around and winked.

Mr. Crane walked between the aisles keeping time by striking his hymn book on his hand and on the heads of the boys he thought weren't doing their best.

"Louder! Louder! Everybody sing!" he cried in his trumpet-like voice. "Now, everybody, once again, sing 'Safe in the Arms of the Lord.'"

Our voices resounded so that the window panes shook and I wondered where all this vitality sprang from, because we hadn't had much of a supper.

"It's getting better, how do you expect to sing during services if you ain't singing now?"

His wife, a frail little woman, sat up straight on the stool and turned when a song was ended to suggest, or ask a boy to suggest, another one. She had small gray washed-out eyes, and a very clean white neck that looked as though it had just been scrubbed. Her hair, yellow and silky, was combed upwards and formed in a ball on her head, recalling to my mind the story of William Tell. She had a sweet countenance and as sweet a disposition and it was a byword among the Fifth that her husband treated her with gallantry. But it was difficult for me to reconcile myself to the belief that it was in him.

"Quit slouching there, Frank LaRue, and straighten those shoulders out! And you quit

scratching, Cocky Fobush," and down came the song book on a moanas' head . . .

"Hog Jaw you ain't singing — you know you ain't singing — you're barely moving those jaws — you ain't even trying to sing — you ain't even trying to try!" and bang! Hog Jaw got it.

"Now everybody quiet but the Fourth and Fifth Divisions and let's see what they intend to do this Sunday. Get ready now. Page sixty-seven. . . . 'This is my Story, this is my Song.' All right . . ."

And he led us, with a voice as powerful as himself and long winglike arms that seemed to swoop the very words from the depths of our frightened souls.

"It's coming along. Just try and sing that way at services. You'd better not let me catch any one of you laying down on me then."

28

Saturday morning I was given my first whipping and almost took it like a man.

My name, and also Ned's were among a dozen that Mr. Sanger read from his notebook in the dining-room.

I racked my brain to discover what it was I could possibly have been caught doing; and concluded I was simply out of luck because he adjudged it a waste of time on his part having to take care of me.

The two lashes were given me in the bathroom as I straddled the iron mule — a four-legged prop brought in from the laundry — and lay with my stomach flat on it.

Mr. Leach poured, and, with each lash, the same twisted flash of pain shot across my face that I had seen on Ned's before me.

"New boy," Ned shook my hand with an impressive countenance as I stepped outside where he waited, burning with pain and shame, "we both took it like men, didn't we?"

And my mouth twitched in an effort to smile but tears flowed from my eyes instead.

The yard was allowed us that afternoon. Everybody but the moanas who had to break rock and Thumbsucker, keeper of the Toilet, went out.

It was a four-acre lot bounded by the railroad track, warehouse, and barn buildings, and three minutes' walk from the administrative.

Through the middle of it ran an imaginary line dividing the first three Divisions from the other two. To cross it meant the moanas' bench. But conversations could be carried on between those of either side by standing a short distance from one another. Candy was passed openly. Tobacco surreptitiously.

The majority of officers and monitors were on stations along the boundary lines. Several walked among us.

We little boys played on the railroad side, leap frog, marbles, tag, or horse shoes.

Ned, Paul, Moonface and myself started by taking sides in a game of horse shoes, and later engaging in a disconnected but wonderfully engrossing walking conversation, until the supper bell called us in.

29

Sunday was a trying day and we were all glad when it was over with.

After breakfast Mrs. Randall sent Ned and me to the little dormitory with instructions to make up the beds but not to sweep, as this enabled us to get through in time to join the "dress-changing" line and also saved her the trip.

The clothing room was over the Toilet. It adjoined the tailor shop, opposite our Dormitory, and was run by Mr. Randall, a small weazened man, with spectacles and false teeth.

Mr. Sanger was chargé d'affaires in the clothing room during changing time when our daily wear was left for our Sunday best: khaki pants, white shirts and white ties. He came up shortly before Ned and I made the last bed, to have everything in order. With him was Tom Travers, a blonde, good looking, First Division heavy, whom he was trying to get off the line. Chock or some field officer relieved him of the little boys left in the playroom.

Mrs. Lourie taught Sunday School to the first

three Divisions in the large classroom, and Miss Ezell and Mrs. Follis had a Division each in the small rooms.

Aunt Lizzie had a jubilant face as we marched into the dining-hall . . . and I ate heartily of mashed potatoes, peas, and cranberry sauce; and cast guilty glances left and right as I nibbled at a pig's knuckle.

Mr. Crane wasn't disappointed in us when the entire institution had assembled for services because we reflected glory on him and warmed the preacher up for his sermon.

It lasted an hour and not only left the little boys squirming but many of the larger ones as well.

During the services Mr. Arnold sat in the midst of his family, away on the other side, with a hand covering his furrowed brow. . . . And at its climax, the preacher, a bony, skin-parched man in a frock coat, stiff collar, and with an expression on his face that precluded all possibilities of contradiction, gazed with open mouth and upraised finger at Mr. Harrison sitting near the piano, who made a silent gesture signifying his unhesitating conviction that it must indeed be so.

30

Miss Sue began teaching Monday.

She was a brown-haired girl of twenty, no taller than I, and as slender and white as a young birch. I had caught my first glimpse of her at services, sitting beside her father and in front of Mrs. Lourie, with Jo' on her lap. She had a narrow, oval face, and small brown eyes that beamed with a friendly curiosity. The lower lip of her little mouth was fuller than the upper and looked as if it was a little swollen. Her voice was low and melodious and a flowerlike smell came from her clothes.

Mrs. Lourie called me up to the front as I entered, and introduced me, or rather told Miss Sue I was the boy she'd been talking about. Then she picked up several brand-new books and in passing them over notified me that the last desk in the little classroom where Miss Ezell taught us Sunday School was to be mine, so Miss Sue, who was taking the Third Grade, wouldn't have but a step to go to look in on me. . . .

And in the afternoons following that one, as my shyness and awkwardness in her presence wore off, her kindness, intelligence and warmth frequently stirred me to a violent joy that made my eyes moisten.

31

Although the preacher had plainly said that any boy who lammed from Reformatory Pilgrimage would of a certainty, when the Day of Judgment came, be dropped through a sky crack into hell, Ned's eyes flashed and his jaws clenched; and he began talking about doing so the yard-day Paul told him in my presence that Chock had bared his teeth during a crap game in the monitors' quarters above the office one morning when the night men began ribbing him about the boast he'd made of never yet having failed to bend a boy to his will: "I ain't even got started yet. You-all wait an' see an' then talk. If his jedge doan' sign no papers I got fo' mo' years an' then some to get mah work in. Ha ha."

We planned. But winter was upon us, snow already covering the ground, and we had to bide our time.

32

Ivy Sullivan and Hog Jaw slept together in the bed next to ours but were not on speaking terms; Hog Jaw never offered Ivy any of the candy he bought from the commissary nor would he lend Ivy money with which to get some for himself. And one night I overheard Ivy ardently praying to his Angel to pounce upon Hog Jaw's Angel and rip him into pieces for this very reason. Hog Jaw also heard, as no doubt Ivy intended him to, but it had no effect on him other than to make him stay down on his knees longer and out-pray Ivy, rising several seconds after Mr. Sanger's knock.

This Hog Jaw was the ugliest little boy in the school, uglier even than Cocky Fobush, and I often wondered why his mother would visit him regularly every Sunday and write to him every day, while many of the others in the Fifth never heard from their mothers for months at a time.

He grunted rather than talked and would never look one straight in the face. If asked for some-

thing on the yard, he would invariably shake his heavy, angular head in negation, and when he did, his sagging jaw quivered like jelly, and his small hazel eyes rolled from side to side like quicksilver held in the palm of one's hand, seeming to be caught in their socket ends just in time to avoid spilling out.

The day that Chicken Driver, the bathroom boy, whose duties also included the sighting and throwing of pebbles at poultry that strayed up on the yard from the barn, went home, Hog Jaw was given his place and put on the moanas' bench before dinner for killing a rooster with a good-sized brick.

Ivy prayed his Angel that night to let up on Hog Jaw's Angel. But when Hog Jaw still ate candy and showed no inclination to part with any of it, Ivy took back his request and asked that Hog Jaw be kept on the bench until he parted with some.

Ivy was a heavybodied boy of sixteen, with long white hair, very light gray eyes, a sickly pale countenance, and a reticent but greedy nature.

It was always best to be on the watch for him when eating or playing marbles on the yard, as he would swoop down on you from somewhere, snatch

what you had if he could, and off with it he would go. And there was no use trying to pursue him for he'd take you across the invisible line, past the Toilet, or anywhere the fancy took him and where you'd make the Bench if you followed. As for himself, he didn't care: Mr. Harrison was his godfather.

In line he had a peculiar walk, stamping his right foot flat down on the pavement and half twisting his body from the waist up. He wore his cap fireman-fashion, or the back of it covering his neck and the peak straight up in the middle of his head. He never combed his hair.

It was a feat to keep him at work in the same place for any length of time. He'd have a sudden lapse of memory and stray off without preliminaries, taking along whatever tools he happened to have in his hand at the moment. The orders were not to whip him. But he was kept in sight by some monitor until he came to himself.

Mr. Arnold, driving along with his horse and buggy one time, had picked him up near the hospital and carried him on a tour of inspection that lasted all day. Ivy had returned, his pockets filled

with hard-rock candy that he exhibited to every boy in the Fifth but ate by himself.

He had several fits while I was there that I didn't see, and one that I did. It was in the playroom on a Sunday morning. Chock had charge. A lanky, six-footer with a lantern jaw, a wide lascivious mouth and a curious shambling walk. Ned and I had just come down from the little dormitory to get in the dress-changing line. Ivy was down on the floor near the stove writhing convulsively like a poisoned dog. His eyes were red, the tears that came out seemed red, his lips were covered with foam, and he was trying to lift his head and snap at Chock, who had his arms pinioned with his knees and was bursting out with sobbing laughter showing his long, discoloured teeth, as he went about slowly fastening Ivy's arms to his body with a rope. After a while he arose, grinning, and looking down at his work. Ivy's face was painfully distorted and he was panting and gnashing his teeth. The froth had increased on his lips and was running down the sides of them. His eyes seemed to be trying to leap right out of his head. Chock called for the line leaders to shove him under a bench until he cooled down

and then went into the kitchen to get a ladleful of water.

When we returned in our Sunday clothes Ivy was lying in a puddle of water, unbound, and over his fit. The froth had disappeared from his lips, his white hair was matted and his eyes glazed like one in a trance.

" What it takes to handle 'pileptics," Chock stood out on the porch and said to Effie Secks as we filed up to Sunday School, " I sho got it."

33

Little Deadman was a remarkably silent and lonely boy, and when spoken to he gazed at one through the lashes of his sad, blue-black eyes and answered very briefly and quietly.

He whispered his prayers all in one breath, so they could beat every one else's up to heaven, I thought, and be the first that God'd have to examine.

When the rest of us played leap frog, marbles, or horse shoes, he stood by watching with his beautiful little hands hidden in his pockets, and disregarded our invitations to join in.

Sometimes he cried in the playroom, not making any disturbance but with tears streaming down his cheeks and an hysterical sobbing in his throat. Mr. Sanger would shake his browless, bird's head when this happened, and heave a sigh as though he respected the lad's deep-seated grief, but we knew it was only because he didn't have to consider his time wasted taking care of him.

Jo' was the only one with whom he ever seemed to be at ease.

When she entered the classroom with her light and charming patter, it became warm and bright and pervaded by an atmosphere of unfamiliar pleasantness. The little boys tried to outdo one another to hold her attention for a moment. Their bait was Jacob's Ladders, Jacob in his Coffin, Giant's Ladder, Crows' Feet and Hangman's Nooses made out of string played over their fingers; and paper birds, pencil drawings, coloured agates and things that had been picked up in the yard or elsewhere. She'd stand appraising one boy's exhibit with her big blue eyes wide open and her chubby hands behind her until another one caught her fancy.

If it happened that her mother washed her hair that night, out she'd come before going to bed, and pass along a row with her black head bent, asking the boys in it if they could smell the soap scent still lingering in her curls.

And, more than once, when she was sitting on our desk, combing Ned's soft hair or tangling his comb in mine, I caught the same scent of perfume from her clothes that always came from Miss Sue's.

34

Train Hater led a harder life than any one else in the Reformatory, harder even than Little Deadman. The boys in the Fifth seldom let him alone. When they did, and no train had been heard for some time, his slanting, green, liquid eyes would emit a strange warm radiance.

Holding his hands funnel-shaped to his mouth, a boy would sneak up behind him on the yard and give an imitation of a train signalling that would startle him almost out of his shoes; and another one would bring on a chase by chugging: " Chick-a-chick — chick-a-chick — chick-a-chick — chick-a-chick — " or another with: " Pick-a-goose — pick-a-gander — set it down over yander — pick-a-goose — pick-a-gander — set it down over yander — "

It culminated in Train Hater affrighting the entire Division one night, by springing out of bed when a train rushed by like a water torrent. He trembled and shrieked until Punter had to give up

trying to tranquilize him and summon the pigeon-toed watchman.

Train Hater was handcuffed and taken over to the hospital . . . and transferred to the asylum next day.

It pleased our imaginations to believe that the engineer behind the throttle that blew those lonesome, prolonged notes at night when the train wound through the fields near by, was a Reform School graduate himself.

"Go — wan — bo-oy," Ned would sing under the blankets, "I'll be ridin' you soon."

35

Mr. Sanger hand-whipped me for no particular reason one frosty morning and it felt as if it were being done with a flaming rope instead of a strap.

He gave me five lashes, and it took all my will power to hold out my hand after the first, instead of trying to escape the man by bolting through the door. He said that he'd heard I passed a remark about him and his wife, which of course was true because all the Fifth talked about them.

However, I knew he was seeking some kind of an excuse to whip me, my conduct having been exemplary, and he picked out this, although he'd never heard any such thing as Ned was the only one I dared confide in.

We could hear them overhead, almost every day, energetically abusing each other in coarse language. She spoke to him in a deep, mannish voice, and he railed at her in a shrill, womanish one. He suspected that she was carrying on affairs with some of the monitors, as we all knew Mrs. Randall

did since Dude Russell left, and watched her like a hawk. What little salary the State paid her he appropriated and then doled out enough to keep her supplied in snuff and several other things that she couldn't get along without.

He now wore a white wrap around his neck and ears, that greatly increased his resemblance to a woman; and there were some mind-staggering tales breathed among the big boys about him.

One Sunday while Ned was working on a window screen with a pair of pliers borrowed from Paul, and I was in the doorway giving the jiggers, I saw Mr. Sanger and Tom Travers coming up the steps arm in arm and kissing each other full on the mouth.

It was disagreeable and comical to see full grown men carrying on in this manner and the memory of it piqued me for many a day after.

36

As winter deepened and the little Dormitory stove began yielding to its embrace, the two-legged wolves ceased prowling around and the monitor on duty was driven under blankets.

Brownie frequently answered snapping fingers for Dewey Punter, who slept next to him with his clothes on.

But one time Punter failed to ask him to do so and several of us were awakened by the persistent snapping of Ed Sweet, a fat, twelve-year-old new boy with pink babyish cheeks and weak, watery eyes.

Dewey Punter was snoring in his chair behind the stove, his owlish head over to one side. An emptied whiskey bottle was on the table. A spilled coffee pot under it.

We whispered at the new boy and answered: "Hite," and tried in every way to get him to go, but he remained shivering beside his bed, a miserable expression on his face, snapping loudly and

looking at us and at him with every snap, as though he thought it were all a trumped-up plot against him.

" Go wan lil' ole boy, go wan! " We insisted. " Go wan! "

But he snapped and waited and snapped and finally couldn't wait any longer.

Punter was reported by the night watchman the next day for missing several whistles and Mr. Harrison put him back on the line, let Keeler round out the month, and then took another heavy, named Klondike, off.

"Lie Gently on Her Earth;
Her Tread was Light on Thee."

37

One warm night toward the middle of April, a week after Bert Keeler had come on Dormitory duty again and started riding Ned and me by hand-whipping and putting us on the Jockey line for whispering, Ned, Paul, Moonface and myself tried to make a lam while he was carrying on in the anteroom with Dimples, a new boy, and we were betrayed by Johnny Hamilton who suddenly screamed in his sleep as though he were being murdered.

The watchman had blown his fourth whistle and was now having his lunch in the kitchen, we judged.

Paul and Moonface slept across the aisle in a bed nearest the center window overlooking the barnyard; and, for this reason we had to take them into our confidence not daring to trust any of the others sleeping by windows on that side. They caught the spirit, insisted upon coming along, and overruled objections by vowing they'd holler, "Lam! Lam!" if we tried to leave without them. Moonface's father happened to be a horse doctor in

Jonesville, the last town in the State this side the border, so he was to be our guide, and when we got there enlist the aid of comrades who would row us over to the other side.

Everything was set and we'd been just waiting for this kind of an opportunity. The screen was pried loose on the bottom and sides so that it could easily be bent back, and sheets, five of them, knotted and tied, were under their mattress, Ned and I having taken them out one by one from the soiled linen on laundry day.

We'd gone to sleep, stockinged, and the rest of our clothes folded and placed on the floor in such a manner that but a moment's work would be sufficient for each to have his in a shirt-wrapped bundle.

"Hite, le's go you-all." Paul and Moonface whispered in one constrained breath, throwing off their blankets immediately the door closed behind Dimples and Keeler.

My forehead was throbbing with maddened nerves and I felt wildly excited. The light from the brackets swam in my eyes as I knelt to tie my clothes. Ned beat me to it and startled me violently,

crossing over the bed in his white cotton night-gown.

" Come on, Albert," he whispered tremulously, his pale, sensitive face more beautiful than ever, " or we'll be left behind."

His graceful form, fair hair and the bundle in his hand made him seem to me to be a fairy tale prince fleeing from assassins.

" I'm right with you, Ned."

And perspiration broke out on my face as I followed.

Paul and Moonface already had their clothes out of the window and we tiptoed over with ours. The boys in their beds lay so lifelessly I felt as though we were carrying on in a morgue.

My heart stood still and the blood rushed to my finger tips as I let my bundle drop. Darkness pressed against the screen like a thick, square block of stone.

" Grab holt of an end, Moonface, an' travel."

Paul raised his mattress and Moonface reached for the rope of knotted sheets. Ned and I doubled the screens; not more than ten seconds could have passed but it seemed to me an eternity.

Next I went to help Paul, brushing by Moonface on his way to the window. There was a forced white smile on his round, full face and he looked like a sailor about to heave a line overboard.

"Go to it, Moonface," I offered timid encouragement. He was to be the first. "We're sliding down right after."

Paul scooped the balance of the rope as I lifted high the mattress and then dropped on his knees to find his end and fasten to a leg of the bed.

His curly locks appeared aflame with the feverishness that had seized him from the start.

"Go wan boy, she'll hold, I'll watch it." He raised and turned his head to say in an overcharged whisper that I thought sure must awaken every boy in the dormitory:

"Sch —"

"Go wan."

Moonface at the window, with one foot out on the sill, hesitated no longer, slid over it on his stomach and went down slowly, like the moon, with Ned steadying him to the last by holding him around the armpits, me sitting on the bed, my feet tight

on the floor, and Paul with his hands clenched about the leg he had tied the sheet to.

"Damn boy," Paul's teeth flashed and his face wrinkled in impatience, "you-all ain't stuck now are you?"

The head of Moonface disappeared and Ned spat on his hands. He was to be next, me third, and Paul last, taking a chance of the bed sliding on him. . . . Ned looked down to see if the way was clear and I started to help him as he did Moonface, leaving Paul alone with the bed, when Johnny Hamilton, up in front, suddenly cut loose in a high falsetto that petrified the three of us.

"Oh! Mr. Harrison! Oh! Oh! Oh! Birgus Cooper did it, Mr. Harrison, not me! Not me, Mr. Harrison! . . . Oh . . ."

Keeler burst out from the anteroom like an Indian on the warpath, his close set eyes directed straight ahead on Johnny — who was now sitting up, rubbing his knuckles in his eyes and crying — and when he saw us out of the corners of them, all our courage drained, he started so violently that his long legs gave a little skip almost causing him to stumble.

The sight of us huddled together had an overpowering effect on him and he stood as though rooted to the spot for a full moment with wide-open mouth and stony eyes.

"Wha — wha — " he articulated, like a man trying to talk with a mouthful of water.

"Come on you-all — Ned," Moonface's soft voice drifted in through the window telling us he had landed safe.

And it sounded as though he'd been dropped thousands of miles into a world he'd found very pleasant. With visions of the moanas' bench and a whipping before me I envied him then for having gone first, although none of us volunteered to do so when planning on the yard and we had to count, "Eenie, meenie, minie, mo, catch a nigger by the toe," three successive times to see in what order fate wanted us to go.

Keeler also having heard Moonface, grasped the situation and turned blacker than he was. He had stopped two beds away from Paul's, where we were, Ned having withdrawn from the window. When he found his voice after an effort it didn't sound like the one that belonged to him.

"What — "

And then the full import of it all coming upon him he impulsively felt for the strap in his back pocket. But — "Damn!" — he forgot it and us and leaped on a bed, causing a squirming and an outcry, and over to the window where he began towing in the sheet as though he thought it wasn't too late yet to bring Moonface up with it.

"Come on back heah, boy, an' I won't 'port you-all," he leaned out, the rope piled up at his feet, and entreated him in a low voice filled with misgivings; and then repeated it louder and waited with his ear cocked to the screen and his narrow troubled eyes on us, but failed to get an answer. . . .

His predicament made me feel somewhat lighter-hearted as it dawned upon me that our frustrated attempt was to have its compensations: even if Moonface were caught tonight Bert Keeler was bound to be pulled off his gravy train: for letting a boy lam from the Dormitory was the one unpardonable crime a monitor could commit: no amount of tall explaining'd keep him off that main line when it marched into breakfast in the morning.

Perhaps it was for that reason, and also because he thought we might of our own accord give a too vivid account of what had transpired to cause our break, that he merely pushed and growled at us to get up in front; and there made us stand behind the stove and face the wall across the table as though we were moanas already.

38

Johnny's cries had awakened some who in turn aroused the others to blink and whisper questions and then stare at the tragedy in awe and wonder. He lay quietly in bed with his mouth wide open and the dried tears glistening on his cheeks, as if subjugated by the horrible nightmare that had proved to be our undoing.

Keeler was over at the " hite " window endeavoring to get a rise out of Jerry, the pigeon-toed watchman. He continued calling for him half-heartedly until a railroad train sharply cut him off to announce it intended coming by. Now his cries came thicker and quicker as though he were trying to frighten it back. " Uh Jeery! Uh Jeery! Uh Jeery! Uh Jeery!"

" I hope Moonface grabs hisself a handful of box ca's at the bend," whispered Ned on one side of me; and " Go wan boy, yo' home ain't heah, an' you know it," sang Paul, under his breath, on the other side.

"Hal-loo! Hal-loo!" the watchman was in the yard.

"Ring that bell, Jeery, there's a lam been made!"

"Hal-loo!"

"Ring that bell! The bell! I said, there's a lam been made on me . . . Goddam it."

It turned over and over spewing its deep-toned iron notes into the clear night air . . . and brought in its wake like evil genii: Monitor, officers, farmers and dogs. . . .

The men shouted and whistled and the dogs raced and barked and it seemed to me that the force and violence of the whole world was massing together in the yard, to make ready and chase after Moonface; and deep down in my heart I wished him God-speed.

"Fetch 'em over to the big dormato'y, Mr. Williams," sternly decreed Mr. Harrison when our clothes had been brought up, buttered corn found in the pockets, and he'd examined all the other evidence and listened to Keeler's lame account of how he'd tilted his chair against the wall that we

were facing, to relax for a moment after supper and discovered when Johnny screamed that sleep had overcome him. " An' tell Chock he'd better keep 'em under his eye: I 'spec' they's smart 'nough now to be doin' time t'other side the River."

I wished I were, because all that had revolved in my mind the half hour we stood listening to the commotion on the yard and about us was that when next moanas' whipping night came around we'd be playing an important part in it. And my heart kept pounding and pounding as though it wanted out.

Mr. Harrison gestured from the stove at the boys in bed that they'd better go to sleep if they knew what was good for them; and then paused on the threshold to twist the ends of his white mustache around his fingers before flying off like a bird to participate in the chase.

We dressed standing behind the stove. Moonface had taken the wrong bundle by mistake, and Paul complained petulantly to us while kneeling on the floor lacing his shoes that he found them much too large.

" Moonface'll kill his feet wearin' yourn," Ned observed in turn. And Paul, not having thought of this, at once responded: " Jesus."

Klondike, Keeler's relief, looked on darkly and silently and with folded arms as Mr. Williams, the lean and wiry, pigeon-toed watchman, handcuffed me to Ned, and Paul to himself, and the little boys watched us pop-eyed, too, despite Mr. Harrison's gestured admonition.

" Git," he ordered Ned and me. And lit up the way down the steps with his lantern.

Outside it had suddenly become quite as if God had hurled a sponge out of heaven to absorb all the sounds.

A rising wind made some of the windows in the washroom rattle.

Night submitted before the watchman's swinging lantern like a whipped negro running sideways with his head buried over a shoulder.

Against the lamp-lit hospital window was the giant silhouette of the six-fingered Nubby; and sitting on a sill of the big dormitory, its hand rising and falling as though pouring leather, that of the lantern-jawed Chock.

It was like being driven through the framework of one of Johnny Hamilton's dreams.

"Say, Ned," I whispered, side-glancing at him narrowly as we passed by the jointed playroom and kitchen, "they ain't got me scared, have they you?"

His white face would have shown in the darkness without the lantern to light it up behind.

"Na-a-w," his voice quivered; and then after a moment's hesitation he gained control of it and added through clenched teeth, giving me an inkling of where his mind had been all along: "It'd take a heap more'n a wolf to scare me!"

"Git!" the watchman ejaculated when we came to the front of the stairs, as though he thought we were mules and might balk.

The head monitor received us with great gusto

as the door opened and he saw what had been brought him.

" They figgered on rabbitin' up on easy-goin' ole Bird Keelah, eh, Jerry? " He swaggered, waving a lank hand that held the strap and looking down at Ned with unconcealed triumph on his long, leather-skinned lantern-jawed face.

" I reckon so." The watchman shrugged his shoulders and replied, without giving him a glance as he removed our cuffs. " So they tell me."

" Hot damn! they ain't goin' to be any rabbitin' done on me — I'm meanin' to make 'em come by me as long as I'm up here."

And flourishing his whip he cracked it on a bedstead making a spark fly out of it as if he were the Devil.

40

There began and dragged on, until I was taken off the moanas' bench, an inexpressibly abominable and soul-ravishing period in my life. It distorted all the ideals that even a very bad boy like myself sometimes does happen to have; and I've never been able since that time to look at the world with clean eyes.

Chock Morton now set earnestly about bending Ned Tanner to his will: and by warping and sensitizing the boy's emotional nature ended in doing so.

The very first night he acted the magnanimous monitor by taking into consideration the fact that Ned was new in the dormitory, and letting him off with a playful lash for having to be urged to go into the anteroom after asking permission to.

It took place a very short while after he'd moved Frank Chaney and Frank LaRue into the Third Division wing from the corner bed right under his nose and told Ned and me we were to have it. Paul,

he sent into the Fourth with a nightgown and the chuckling declaration that as the brothers had been sentenced by the Judge principally because they were a bad influence for each other on the outside, he was sure the Court wouldn't take it amiss if he saw that they were in each other's company as little as possible on the inside.

"He ain't foolin' anybody," Ned said grimly as we got into bed and Chock sauntered off tugging at the back of his neck with the strap he held across his shoulders. "And he knows he ain't foolin' anybody either."

We were in that section of the main dormitory between the two wings and on the yard side of the aisle that ran from wing to wing. Sixteen beds were in it. Four square. The window that whistles were answered from was between our row and the next. A table with a lunch bucket and other things on it and a stack of nightgowns under it was against the sill at the foot of our bed. In the same aisle, a little further up, the stove and a cushion-seated armchair.

Chock hadn't taken many steps and was moving sluggishly between two long rows of beds close to

the anteroom aisle, his back still to us, when Ned arose to snap.*

Chock went right on as though he hadn't heard, glancing down at the sleeping faces of the big boys on either side of him, and Ned biting his lip, snapped again, this time louder.

"Hite."

The monitor turned into another row, not raising his head to see whom he had answered, and at the same time a heavy-set scowling-faced thirty-year-old boy rose and was challenged: "Hite," then still another: "Hite."

Ned, already out in the aisles, seeing the two large boys, one thin and one stout, coming from east and west to fall in and go back also, grew purple-faced and dismayed, hesitated and would have turned and retreated had not Chock paused then in the middle of his aisle to lift his head and take stock of them. He watched Ned, quizzically

* It was a rule that one must hit the bed before asking permission to go; in other words be undressed. Three boys had once gone straight to the anteroom upon entering the dormitory and made a lam with their clothes on. In winter and even summer this ruling saved the monitors a lot of trouble: most boys, once settled in bed, hated to get up and tiptoe over the floor in their bare feet, folded arms, and ridiculous nightgown.

rubbing his lantern jaw. The heavy passed by like a sleep-walker and Ned recoiled. Chock showed his long, discoloured teeth: "Go wan back thar, boy, ain't nobody a-goin' to touch you." The voice was of conciliation but Ned still wavered and Chock raising a lank hand repeated less complacently: "Go wan boy, go wan, I'm a-tellin' ya."

Ned went behind the thin one, timorously picking his way.

When he returned the monitor was sitting at the foot of the last bed in our row, a thin smile hovering on his wide mouth and the strap twirling in his hand. He watched Ned pass him on tiptoe with folded arms, set face, and eyes fixed straight ahead, and then cowboy-fashion brandished his strap overhead and brought it down lightly on the boy, barely touching his gown. Ned started like a hare — not expecting it, not knowing what to expect.

"Nex' time, boy, when you-all snap, you'd better go on back 'thout me a-havin' to coax you to, hear?"

And he placed his hands on his knees and rose with a broad smile to answer the whistle, as Ned climbed in beside me atremble from head to foot.

41

We lost our jobs when Detail was called; and Mr. Harrison sent us out with a hoeing gang of forty to prepare a large plot of ground behind the hospital for tomato planting.

Mr. Libby, the Third Division officer, Uncle Bodleigh whose agricultural knowledge was needed in the fields during the summer, and three monitors, herded us.

Moonface was of the party. They'd brought him in shortly after the chase began, caught in an empty, side-tracked box car half a mile away, afraid to go any farther until dawn.

"Man! Man! Neither would you-all if you heerd the hounds yelpin', yokels yodelin', shotguns blastin' an' had a pair o' State shoes pinchin' yo' feet in the ba'gain!" He vindicated himself in a rising temper as Paul started scoffing when he was giving us an account of it, marching by the hospital.

All around us were birds and sounds of joy; the

fresh fragrant air caused a pleasant sensation of giddiness; and the red sun balanced itself on a tip of the earth as though waiting to start with us.

We were spread out at arm's length facing the field and then told to turn about and go to it, silently and properly; officers and monitors moving back and forth and watching the falling hoes and us to see that we did.

The ground was hard and muscle had to be used to get beneath its crust. Mankiller came by before I'd taken a dozen strokes to say that I'd better watch myself because I wasn't going deep enough and also for another reason. . . .

The rest were making more progress than I, but couldn't have been working harder. I wondered if there wasn't a certain trick to be caught onto and took a chance once by asking Paul but he said he didn't know of any. . . .

A second monitor chopped a piece for me to see whether anything was wrong with my hoe. There wasn't.

" Boy, you'd better keep up with that line."

I tried my best to, and, by chopping furiously

and not going as deep as I thought I should, I caught up and held it for an hour or more, my body bathed in sweat, but the line soon slipped away from me again like water leaving the shore at ebb tide. . . .

Little Blackie the water-boy came along with his bucket and I paused to lean on my hoe and take a drink. Behind him was Mr. Libby, and to my amazement he asked for my hoe and then wielded it for half an hour without uttering a word. A handsome, sun-browned, stalwart man with a glass eye and the reputation of having been in the Spanish-American War and adventured all over the globe since then. He had lived a life apart from the other officers since his arrival; and none knew through what political influence he'd contrived to obtain his job.

I thanked him by lip and with grateful eyes when my implement was returned to me and he nodded and briefly replied: " That's all right."

But instead of being benefited by the relief I began to have a much harder time. However, I now had the consolation of knowing that I wasn't the only one as I first felt inclined to believe:

while watching him I'd seen Uncle Bodleigh and the monitors pouring leather on large boys and small.

I followed Paul's example of spitting on my hands to see what magic effect this might have; and discovered they'd given birth to several blisters that were waiting to be acknowledged before beginning to ache. Uncle Bodleigh happened by as I examined them in curiosity again and measured with his giant feet the width of the space I was hoeing to find out whether I'd been apportioned " too far a piece."

He was a God-fearing, terribly merciless farmer, with seventeen children of his own, and he stole everything in the institution he could lay his hands upon. Every one from Johnny Hamilton up to Mr. Harrison knew that to be a fact. Nothing was too large or small: chicken feed, wagon spokes, clothes, combs, brushes, storaged-meat and silverware. A gigantic, broad-chested, square man with coffee-coloured eyes hidden under thick eyebrows and a copper complexion. On the Detail line every morning Mr. Harrison would ask him by way of greeting if he'd done his family duties last night and Uncle

Bodleigh'd reply with a bovine grin that he sure had and that leaving her side at dawn was like leaving the warmth of a cow. When he walked he seemed to let his full weight settle with every step he took as if testing the Earth's firmness.

His decision was not in my favor and so he ordered me to bend over and touch my toes, and then gave me a lash for lagging behind that made my entire being feel as if it'd been blistered and burst and the water finding its outlet through my eyes.

"Thar hain't no excuse for ye not a-doin' your share," he cried in a thin, angry voice, as though the land belonged to him and to me. "Pick up yer hoe an' git goin'."

I sought for it through tear-blurred eyes and with a hatred born in my heart for him and all ignorant and improvident rustics that had anything to do with the Reformatory. . . . I gnashed my teeth and chopped as though I had them on the ground at my mercy. But this didn't last very long: my arms and shoulders ached and the blisters on my hands throbbed with pain. . . . Mankiller poured two lashes in the same fashion as Uncle Bodleigh. I

worked in another heat . . . now a different monitor . . . a score of others were being accorded the same treatment . . . and there was no let-up until the bell rang. Mr. Libby, who'd relieved several besides myself, Ned and Moonface among them, entirely disregarded Uncle Bodleigh and the monitors' comments, but told those for whom he hoed that he was merely working up an appetite for dinner. . . . We had one too, a ravenous one, but storm clouds were gathered in the shriveled face of Aunt Lizzie our sympathizing meal reporter.

I was crushed and embarrassed before Miss Sue that afternoon; and she sat at her desk with downcast eyes and slightly flushed face and heard me recite in silence. When it was over she assigned my lessons for the next day and then rose to go in and teach the Third, with a shy and troubled glance at me and a rustle of her skirts. A little later I tiptoed up to her desk with the last book she had lent me, *David Copperfield,* and a note saying that I wouldn't have time to read any more now, and would she please let me have this one back again when I did.

We heard Jo' in the classroom, as we faced the blackboard, asking her little friends where was Ned. And when it was time for her to leave, she went by way of the front and touched his arm and then mine.

42

The anteroom was the rendezvous for quite a number of the older and younger boys. Business was transacted in it: chewing tobacco, smoking, candy, and patronage exchanged for embraces and other favours. Chock and the wing monitors, Black Thomas and Dick Griffin, winked their eyes upon it, collecting duty from the older ones to save for the day of their release or to spend on drink, gambling, and women when they went into town once a week.

Three quarters of the boys in the Fourth were under eighteen, but age didn't seem to make any difference from the way those in the First and Second bandied words at one another on the yard or in their playroom.

When a boy in the wing or under Chock's eye, snapped, he had to pass the glittering-eyed inspection of the heavies whose beds were in his path. I cannot describe my feelings the first time I had to do so.

And then one night when all three monitors were

in the Third Division wing "hiting" to snapping fingers from in there while they drank and shot craps on a taut blanket for money and tobacco, I witnessed an orgy so disgusting, so offensive, that I wished my eyes had been struck out right then. . . . I felt as if I were being suffocated, and stumbled, rather than tiptoed back to bed crying out low with nausea as I climbed over Ned and hugged the wall with my back on the whole dormitory: "Oh, God, why must Reformatories be like this? Oh God! Oh God! Why must they be?"

"Hey, Albert, what's the matter?" Ned inquired drowsily, turning over and touching my shoulder. "Won't the home again blues let you be?"

I shook my head, not wanting to see his face, nor have him look at mine, but my heart became loaded with a heavy pity for him and for myself.

43

Moanas' whipping night found Mr. Leach in good form; and he jerked leather to such perfection that not one of us took it like a man, although we'd had two weeks to prepare ourselves in and get hints from those already gone through the ordeal.

"I'll bet you-all'll hear no squawk out'n me."

"Me either."

"I kin take all he got an' fo'ty licks on top."

"Keep bitin' ha'd on yo' undah lip, Paul."

"Li'l ole boy, I guess I know how to do!"

"Jes tighten yo' body, Moonface."

"An' think o' bein' anywhere else but in a Refo'm School."

"An' close yo eyes, so's not to see the strap comin'."

"An' hollerin' ain't doin' you-all no good nohow so take it like a man, boy, take it like a man."

There were nine of us on the bench and we went in according to size. Ned was first and the rest lined up in the aisle outside the door. Duckbill

stood over us. Mr. Sanger sat on the desk swinging his rickety legs and craning his birdlike head.

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" Ned's voice, but not very loud, came through the door; and seemed to gradually fill the room, until they let up on him, like the dense fog that'd kept us in from the fields a day before.

My heart bled for him; and when he came out with distorted face and tear-dimmed eyes my lips moved but failed to form the words: "It's all right, Ned, we'll lay for 'em in town some day when we get out and grow to be their size."*

"Next!" Mr. Harrison called out briskly through the opened door as though he were running a barber shop.

The blood rushed to my face and my knees shook. I was a little dry about the roof of my mouth and my legs seemed robbed of all power to move.

"Go wan, Albert," Paul whispered, touching my back as if he were in a hurry to get it over with, "and take it like a man."

Mr. Leach was waiting for me in the center of the room with his hands behind his back, his legs

* In prison six years later I met a boy, Red Barry, serving life for having shot dead a Reform School officer on the Kansas City streets a month after he was released.

spread apart, and the long, thick strap dangling down between them, looking like Satan had tailed him for the occasion.

Beside him stood Mr. Harrison twisting the end of his mustache with one hand and pointing to the stool at their feet with a manicured finger of the other. " Down on yo' knees an' hug it."

Mankiller who'd been behind the door closed it simultaneously with my dropping down, as if that were his cue for doing so.

" Whip away, Mr. Leach, I'm ready if you are," Mr. Harrison addressed him as though he were in my place.

Mr. Leach side-stepped. I twisted my head up at him in fright. Our eyes met. In mine there was a wild appeal for mercy. Calculating indifference in his: " Shift over a mite an' keep that head aroun'." His voice was hoarse and thick, obstructed by a mouthful of tobacco. The blue bandanna was knotted on his wrist; and his neck was crookeder and eyes redder than ever.

Sa — wish! The strap descended. Sa — wish! It came down again. I yelled and the stool seemed to try to tear away from me in fright. Sawish! Sawish!

Sawish! I fast was burning with pain and shame. My face seemed to be swelling, my tingling ears to be filled with blood, and unpleasant noises surged through my head. Sawish! Sawish! Sawish! Mr. Harrison was shouting something as I wrestled all over the floor with the stool and his voice sounded shrill and curious in my ears. It sounded as though he were trying to make himself heard in a steam room. Sawish! with the rising strap my heart rose and with its fall came a sinking sensation. Sawish! Sawish! Sawish! Sawish! Sawish! It was all over with. Fourteen lashes, and I was rising to my knees in a far corner of the room, like some strange thing from the sea, dazed with a dull sense of pain. Another lash or so and I would have "gone numb" and then they could have beat upon me like a carpet until doomsday.

"Next!" Mr. Harrison called, as I passed out with my heart turned to stone.

And, as I walked up an aisle to take my place on the bench beside Ned, Paul's cries began like a continuation of my own.

44

For several days after my flesh was in a state of inflammation and covered with great red and blue weals; and I could not sit down at the table or in the classroom without shifting from side to side.

Miss Sue asked me in a voice of apprehension and her eyes filled with a vague alarm, what it was that caused my uneasiness; and, when I blurted out in great embarrassment that I'd been whipped the night before, the colour flew to her face, her lips parted slightly, but she never said a word and we avoided each other's gaze for the remainder of the lesson.

To our herders in the fields, excepting Mr. Libby, it made no difference that we'd just received a moana's whipping.

He carried a strap but only had occasion to use it once to my knowledge; when enraged at a heavy for telling Chock that Mr. Libby had come by and remarked sarcastically to him, a moment after Uncle Bodleigh'd got through warming him up,

that if he were as brawny a lout as him they'd never be able to see him in a Reformatory for dust or fists. Mr. Libby gave him a terrific whipping, seemingly losing his head in doing so, and then repeated the same thing and openly defied him or any one else within hearing distance to say that he had said it.

"Don't go to sleep, Albert, please, for Christ's sake stay awake with me tonight!" Ned pleaded with the hurt of life in his beautiful eyes for the fourth or fifth time since we'd moved. "It ain't right of me askin', I know, an' it won't stop him from goin' on doin' his sweet-talkin' but it's only two weeks now 'fore he goes off'n duty an' knowin' you're awake'll help me bear up."

It was Saturday. We'd been pulling weeds on our hands and knees all morning in the onion patch near the highway, and breaking rock in the afternoon, and every muscle in my body ached from toil and I knew that neither of us would be able to keep the vigil but: "All right, Ned, only don't go blaming me now if you fall asleep first, like you did the last time, you hear?"

"I couldn't help it, why didn't you pinch me awake?"

And I had to confess that I supposed it was because we'd both dropped off to sleep at the same time.

It seemed odd when I first heard him asking me to stay awake for Christ's sake, and I wondered if it'd arouse Jehovah's ire if I petitioned him to do something for Ned. If he and Chock, and Mankiller and Little Deadman, and Mr. Harrison and Mr. Arnold, had the same Christ, I thought, then it was high time my Jah took a hand and straightened matters out. My faith in Him had grown firmer than ever since I'd seen what a Christian world was like. And I laughed with scorn at the other boys who at times tormented me, out of tedium, to accept Jesus like the preacher had directed; and be washed in his blood and be saved.

And of late I'd stopped praying when the others did for I couldn't help but think that the purity of my prayers was sullied by the presence of Chock and Mr. Leach who knocked every night for the entire Dormitory to drop down on their knees.

I spoke of this to Ned and he asked what difference it made; a prayer was a prayer. But later he thought it over and came to see it my way, concluding that all his prayers against Chock had been renigged since some officer or monitor had charge over them.

There was hardly a night that Chock let him alone. He tormented and cajoled and threatened and invoked. Sometimes he would make him eat a sandwich or a piece of pie and drink some cocoa, milk or tea, and at others he would stand him up beside our bed with folded arms until the poor lad's legs gave way from weariness.

" Boy, do the right thing by me an' I will by you."

Once Ned had to get up and snap, and Chock, who was standing by the stove warming his supper, smiled malignantly and said " no." Ned's face was flushed with the efforts to contain himself, and a little later, when Chock did relent, it was in great distress and with the head monitor's dry and disagreeable laughter in his ears that he made his way to the anteroom.

I received several hand-whippings from him; once because he thought I had my eyes open after the first whistle and another one for changing places without permission, and sleeping on the outside. But my palms had become almost as toughened and accustomed to them as the other boys' and I could take all he gave me without flinching or making the least outcry.

"Boy, you-all's gittin' strap-ha'dened, go wan, git back into bed."

He took no notice of me after that time but an insufferable hatred arose in my soul against the man.

I don't know what happened that Saturday night for we were both sound asleep before the first whistle. But there was a marked change in Ned's nature the next day. His comely face appeared paler than usual and at breakfast it twitched several times as though in a cramp.

He faltered that he didn't feel well when Miss Sue called upon him in Sunday School to begin the lesson, but shook his head as she grew concerned and asked if he hadn't better let her send him to the hospital. This caused her to redden to the tips of her ears and drop her eyes to read the entire text herself.

I tried in vain at every opportunity to shake him out of his mood; and, when the other two monitors looked curiously our way as they passed from wing to wing that night, my heart sank within me.

46

It got to such a point that when I was in the presence of Chock or Mankiller, my hands began to tremble as though seeking for something heavy with which to pummel them across the head and shoulders. I couldn't keep this intense hatred for them out of my eyes and many a lash did it draw from the latter who beat me upon the slightest provocation. And one Saturday afternoon when we were sitting at the foot of the pile, breaking rock with the long-handled hammers, and he was striding around, cracking his strap in the air over every moana's head, as though he thought we were horses, I became so incensed at his snarling, "Christ Killer!" at every turn, "Come on, give me rock!" that I lost my head, and springing to my feet with upraised hammer shrieked, "Mankiller, Mankiller!" square into his beetling-browed face, and was promptly felled with a blow on the jaw and kicked in the ribs and head.

47

I never regretted calling him that, for it earned me a brief rest and change of diet, and resulted in his being put back on the line by Mr. Harrison, who was then acting Superintendent, Mr. Arnold having had another stroke the evening before and been told by the doctor that the next might be his last and so he'd better stay at the Sanitarium this time, until a cure had really been effected.

Turnip Head told me all about it when bringing me some chicken broth, chocolate pudding, mouth-melting Zwiebach from Mrs. Arnold's table and a half dozen books from her library.

The news had spread like wildfire as I was being carried over unconscious by two moanas', Duckbill alongside, and Aunt Lizzie had corralled Mr. Harrison about it in the office where he was sitting with his feet on Mr. Arnold's desk. Out he came flying, his mustache wild, to stand swaying on the sidewalk bend like a sailor in the breeze, and make a big display before the whole school by calling Mr.

Leach up from the yard and telling him that by God nothing of this sort was to be tolerated while he was Superintendent, and to put Mankiller back on the line despite his protestations that he had struck in self-defense.

"And Dewey Punter was taken off to fill his place," finished Turnip, stacking up the empty dishes in his basket.

I waved good-bye at him, not being able to say it. The entire left side of my face was as sore as a boil and my ribs felt as though caved in. It was difficult for me to take a short breath. There was an open cut over my left eye and an egg-sized lump in the middle of my head. . . . But they all ached deliciously for a moment when I found *David Copperfield* among the books sent.

48

Peggy and myself were the only little boys in the ward and we were isolated from the dozen others on our side by three vacant beds.

Miss Mary, the nurse, a fat noisy female, had the hospital. She kept the big boys well in hand by threatening to discharge them, sick or not, if she caught them doing anything, but she winked at us with her small gray eyes, and smiled.

The fifth day she told me that, if I wanted to, I could help her and Roy Wells, the hospital boy, with the trays and other things.

He was a short, strong, bold lad with black clipped hair that fitted him like a cap, narrow black eyes, a set jaw, and no time for foolishness. He inspired respect in the boys of the Fifth because he had a brother serving life across the River who had been there fifteen years. He was a year older than Roy, who did not remember having seen him. He was holding down an important job, Head Trusty, and sent Roy two dollars regularly every month.

My first task with him was to scrub and clean up about the operating room, for Peggy's stump had become infected and he was to go under ether tomorrow, we two having to wheel him in and out.

The surgeon, Doctor Flannagan, was one of the best in the capital, and came out for a few moments every morning to examine those held over from the sick, lame and lazy line; and on Monday and Friday afternoons to shoot a couple dozen big boys with 606. When Roy explained to me why he did this, and added that one little boy, who came into the Reformatory clean, had already contracted the horrible disease, I made a mental note to dry my face on my shirt tail hereafter, and never to use the common tooth-brushes and combs.

I was of very little assistance to Peggy, for I fainted when I saw the doctor skin back his stump and start sawing through the bone, like a butcher cutting meat.

Roy helped me out and sat me in Miss Mary's armchair near the screen door where I filled my lungs with fresh air and relieved them of the smell of ether, blood, bones and flesh.

"Li'l ole boy, your worse'n a Sunday School sissy," he said in irritation and then hastened back in.

When they wheeled Peggy back again, I was still in a maze. I'd been in one from the very beginning, his whimpering making me feel as if I were carting him to the executioners.

"Oh, Doctor, Doctor, Doctor, don't hurt me Doctor, Miss Mary don't let him hurt me," he beseeched, turning around as we sat him on the table, to gaze at her through his large gray eyes as though she were his mother.

"Lie down, Peggy, you know he won't hurt you."

"Of course not, son, you won't feel anything."

Miss Mary poured the ether from a can and Roy and I had to hold his arms to keep him from struggling. The doctor warned us when Peggy lay still, and he was tying a turniquet below his thigh, not to watch him at his work. . . . But Miss Mary was watching as she continued pouring, and Roy seemed to be fascinated, so I just had to turn my head.

He came out of it a short while before dinner and stared at me with glassy eyes, so I ran and got Miss Mary as she had told me to do. She gave him a big dose of morphine and he sank back into unconsciousness. An hour later the same thing happened again. I rushed into the kitchen to say he was tossing from side to side, groaning.

And all that night he kept me and others awake, and Nubby cursing and springing his double-jointed thumb.

"O — oh — oo — oh."

His stump was in a cast and he groaned and tossed the upper part of his body from side to side as though he were trying to bring it out. He jerked the covers off every time Nubby threw them back, shrieking that they were stifling him; and tore at his nightgown and pillow.

Miss Mary brought relief once, but told Nubby not to bother her any more, as Peggy's body would soon pass off the strain; that he'd been given more

than was usual in such cases; and that she didn't want to make a dope fiend out of him.

In the morning I left him breathing hard and fast as though he were spent from running a long distance during the night. . . . Miss Mary was at his bed when I brought his tray up, watching him pitch and listening with a smile to the important confession he'd called her to make.

"— An I stole some dobies an' meat from Nubby's dinner bucket, Miss Mary, hope to die if I didn't — an' I stole Frog Hunter's agates, Miss Mary, hope I lose my other leg if I didn't — an' I found Uncle Bodleigh's plug o' horseshoe and kept it, hope my other leg never catches up with me in the next world if I didn't — an' I stole Jo' Arnold's box o' Cracker-Jack, hope my hands get cut off an' I can't steal any more if I didn't, Miss Mary. . . ."

I removed his tray when Miss Mary shook her head; and left, wondering why he was making these sudden revelations; until it grew upon me that his physical sufferings were such there was no longer room for secrets and so they had to be ground out.

He fell into a sound sleep shortly after this and didn't awaken again till late in the afternoon. I was

waxing the floor with a mop in the aisle near his bed and he frightened me by sitting up suddenly, his long, yellow, freckled face transfigured:

"Hallo thar — the pain's gone."

I beamed, feeling as happy about it as he.

"Where are you, pain?"

And then he spoiled it all by bending over and timidly drumming the nail of his forefinger on the cast, as though rapping at pain's door to see if it were still in. It was, and it swirled out in a frenzy for having its nap disturbed.

"O — oh — oo — oh," screamed Peggy, falling back on his pillow again. "Oh, Jesus — Mother Mary — Oh — "

I half lifted the mop from the floor, a maniacal impulse seizing me at the moment to drive pain into its home again by bringing it down on his cast.

He was well on the road to recovery when I was discharged from the hospital next week, Miss Mary really finding no excuse to keep me there any longer: "I'd like to, but Mr. Harrison asks about you boys every day, saying they're hard pressed for help as it is now."

50

It was summer-time. The days and nights were hot and close. A fetid and unwholesome atmosphere prevailed in the dormitory. I could never become accustomed to it.

School had let out and Miss Ezell and Miss Sue were teaching summer classes in the city. I felt miserable and heavy-hearted and fall seemed a long, long way off.

All five divisions now wore broad-brimmed straws. The Fourth and Fifth had been deprived of their shoes and stockings. At first it was trying and painful for me to travel without them but after my feet had outgrown the stone and other bruises, I found it a real treat.

Aunt Lizzie's face cleared up a little oftener, now that we toiled in the fields like slaves, but sometimes we even felt a resentment toward her for forecasting meals that left us unappeased.

Ned didn't come out in the fields with us any more: he was working in the officers' dining-room

under Mrs. Lourie, the Sangers having departed: she first, and without giving any notice, after a terrible wrangle they had one morning in the quarters; and he, a day later, nursing a swollen lip and broken spectacles and with fifty dollars in cash that some of the larger boys had let him carry for safe-keeping.

A new man, Mr. MacPherson, was given the Fifth Division. The little lads breathed in relief.

Many new boys came and a handful of old ones left and of the latter there wasn't one that didn't carry away his experiences on his hide.

Mr. Crane started in on a boy one afternoon, and forgetting when to stop lashed him into unconsciousness. To mollify the doctor, who handed in the report in a rage after seeing the boy, Mr. Harrison suspended Mr. Crane for a month.

The Board transferred Mr. Leach to Briar Mountain Penitentiary to see how things were doing there; and Uncle Bodleigh stepped into his shoes, and what he lacked in finesse he made up for with vigour.

Scarcely a day passed but what someone didn't try to take it on the lam from our Department or

the Coloured. If they made it: "Boy, I wished I was in your shoes." And if not: "Hell, he oughta knowed better'n to go that-a-way."

But a thrill coursed through our veins from the moment the gong sounded till the chase died down, similar to that one gets at the Derby if he glasses the horses from start to finish.

The time Lloyd Rollins, the auburn-haired boy of twenty that Ned had likened to Jo's pony, tried it, we were all out on the playground. It was a Saturday and his first day in the Reformatory to serve a second term. No one need have pointed him out to me as he walked swiftly around the yard on the ball of his feet between two other fellows. His large, expressive golden-brown eyes gazed deliberately about him and every once in a while he'd throw back his leonine head and laugh loudly and merrily. The officers and monitors seemed to have eyes for no one else but him. And the little boys had no heart for games but stood around in groups and wagged their tongues.

"They hain't keepin' him long."

"I'll say."

"Lam in a minute if nobody ain't lookin'."

" An' if he takes a notion he will, if they are."

" Tried it so many times his first jolt we all quit countin'."

" An' come back wunst of his own accord 'cause has gal ast him to do right by the law an' go straight."

" Moanas' whippin' night don't faze him."

" He kin take five hundred standin' on his head."

" Yonder he goes off the yard."

" Uh uh."

" Watch him, boy, watch him."

And sure enough a moment later Thumbsucker came a-running and waving his black hands wildly in the air. . . . Lloyd Rollins had shot past his station like an arrow from a bow.

" He's off! "

" He's off! "

" I knew it."

" I knew it, too."

Headed for the river. . . . The clanging bell spurred him on this time: " Run! Boy! Run! Run! Run! Run! . . ."

Mr. Harrison despatched two officers and five monitors after him. Duckbill, the fleetest, started

out running low; our curses went along with him.

"Wolf!"

"Judas!"

"Copper lover!"

"Snakes' kin!"

And, an hour later, when Duckbill returned leading the way, stripped to the waist like a triumphant Indian Chieftain, with Lloyd Rollins dripping wet behind him, surrounded by officers, monitors, farmers and dogs, his leonine head conspicuous among all:

"Whoever made this world, boy, got his bearings all twisted."

"Damn if he didn't unless it was ole Nick."

Mr. Harrison had Lloyd transferred to the Penitentiary Monday, saying as he took out the papers that the court didn't know what the hell it was all about re-sentencing a rabbiting fool like him to a prison without walls.

But many of us sighed and wished we were going along, because there's no sense in being sidetracked on Reformatory Rail when you know you have to come out on the Main Line anyway.

51

Ned and I had been parted since the incident that sent me to the hospital. Upon my return I was assigned to a bed in the wing with Robert Locket, one of the boys transferred from the Fifth: conditions were overcrowded there and they were sleeping three in a bed. To make room for them in the Fourth the line leaders of it were advanced to the Third and so on. When the First got too large Mr. Harrison scratched his white head and made monitors out of as many as he could.

Mr. Libby also tried to help him thin the ranks by voicing his contempt for the heavies who took their beatings as meek as lambs; and five of them, one sun-scorching afternoon, used their fists and feet on Uncle Bodleigh with such effect that he was left lying as dead until supper time, and they had a four-hour start.

Duckbill and Dewey found him lying flat on his face, his hands strapped behind him, in the pole bean patch a hundred yards or so from the River.

It aroused a feeling of malicious glee in me, and my nostrils dilated from a pleasant tickling sensation when I saw the battered Uncle Bodleigh leaning heavily on their shoulders for support, his giant feet dragging the sidewalk, as we passed them on our way to the bathroom to wash our feet after supper. . . . And the faces of almost all the Fourth and Fifth radiated that night as though in a united effort to please little Jo'.

A short time later Mr. Libby left by request of Mr. Harrison who acted through the Board; and Ellis Sanders, the boy in Paul's place, said that Mr. Libby tossed up a Chinese coin in the office right in front of Mr. Harrison's rabbit-eyed face, to see whether he'd take the train north or south.

Something cold as an iceberg seemed to have come into Ned's heart, and he moved amongst us looking pale, proud and indifferent.

At first he'd been silent and sulky, avoiding me, his brother Paul, and everybody else, and talked with averted eyes to whoever addressed him. Little Jo' sensed the change in him immediately and it left her tremulous with embarrassment when she asked to be taken into his arms but was refused: "Go look an' see what that li'l ole boy yonder's makin', Jo', I'll bet its being made for you-all."

He brought me out things in his blouse from the officers' dining-room but the silent attitude in which they were given made them taste savourless in my mouth.

I talked and talked but understood that my words were superfluous. I could neither comfort nor condemn.

The cruellest cut of all came when he accused me of being responsible for a short scuffle he and

Paul had had out on the yard. I didn't understand him and knit my brows. Finally I made a guess and asked him low: "Maybe, Ned, you think I told your brother Paul about you and Chock. It isn't so. I told no one about it. Black Thomas and Dick Griffin knew it before I did."

He started to retort. Then blushed scarlet and bit his lip. And from then on whenever he spoke to me at all it was in a cold voice and in the third person.

People that had become interested in me brought pressure upon Mr. Harrison, with the result that I was taken out of the fields and put into the office when Ellis Sanders left.

" — An' don't fail to info'm 'em I done as they asked, hear? " he said that morning when picking me out from the Detail line, and then added in a lowered voice as he glanced down at the sheet again, " cause ah know theah got 'nfluence at the capital."

Aunt Lizzie congratulated me upon my good fortune as I went through the dining-room, the wrinkles on her face heaped up in smiles, and her crew clearing off the tables passed remarks:

" Boy you caught it! "

" The Gravy Train Special."

" Watch out it don't ditch you, though, 'cause its sho' slippery ridin'."

" Do the rest spinning on your head, now, eh, li'l ole boy."

" Or standin' on his left eyebrow."

Upstairs, where I slept on my first night, Steve Wilkins, a dormitory monitor with shallow black eyes, a bent nose, and a hare-lip, was standing in a doorway unbuttoning his shirt. His eyes lit up when he saw me and he smacked his hare-lip and started talking. But I walked swiftly by him, my eyes fixed straight ahead and made believe I didn't hear.

" Come back here, boy, come here," he lisped with his short tongue, as I raced down the steps, " you-all kin make yo'self 'nough smokin' to last fo' a month."

Mr. Arnold's office was vacant and I introduced myself to Mr. Reeves, the bookkeeper, who was standing at an adding machine in the one adjoining.

He was a tall man with gray eyes, a high forehead, and a pleasant expression on his long, earnest face. The boys spoke in whispers about him and held him in great respect. He was a returned soldier, silent and thoughtful, lived in the capital, and one rarely saw him except when he passed through the dining-room to go into the commissary on business or see if Mr. Arnold or Mr. Harrison

were out in back. Paul told me that he was a peach, that anybody could cotton to him, and that he wished all the officers'd gotten a dose of war like him and Mr. Libby, because it might have done them some good.

" Go out and sit on the steps or lie on the lawn, son," he said in a soft, preoccupied voice, barely glancing at me. " There's nothing to do now until the mailman comes in."

54

Jo' and her brother Frank were out in front, on the edge of the narrow road, waiting for Jo's new caretaker, Paul Durney, to bring around her pony and buggy from their lodging place, the barn.

The wide expanse of well-kept lawn between the office and highway was studded here and there with round plots of many-coloured flowers in full bloom, and alive with the cries of invisible insects and birds on the wing. Beyond, the broad, uneven, uncultivated fields I had seen upon my arrival were now brown and level with cultivation. The sky was a deep blue.

Around the corner of the building, from the side that the Arnolds lived in, Paul Durney came up walking lazily beside the pony, who nodded his white-starred forehead as it dragged the basket-carved buggy along. Durney was a good-looking boy with dark, warm eyes.

"Yonder's the new office boy," he remarked,

pointing his finger when the pony halted in front of Jo' and I started to sit down sideways on the edge of the top step and let my feet hang down, to watch them get in and drive off.

Jo' and Frank, who'd been standing with their back to me, turned around and looked. Frank was dressed like a Reformatory boy, even to his bare feet, and Jo' in sandals, a rose-coloured print dress, and a light straw with an elastic under her chin, seemed in harmony with all nature around her.

" Howdy," Frank greeted, and she followed his example.

I waved my hand at them.

The pony neighed softly, tossed his thick mane, and then pushed his silky nose into Jo's ear causing her to spring aside with a little startled scream and the three of us to burst out laughing.

" What's 'oo doing," she went up to him and began scolding, shaking her little finger in his face, and continued scolding with her baby talk, until he started pawing and craning his neck as though it caused him great uneasiness.

But when she was being lifted into the buggy he

turned his long head and gazed at her affectionately with his big, sad blue eyes.

"Giddap! Giddap!" She took the reins from Paul and ordered him.

Mr. Reeves told me to pour out all the mail on the long table in the visiting room and return the sack to the mailman: an old rustic with a patriarchal beard, a mouthful of tobacco, an alert eye, and a whining voice, who had driven up in a small open truck.

"Git yo' sack, now, sonny, an' don't lemme catch ye snoopin' aroun' smellin' o' the others."

When he left he kept constantly looking back into his truck and to where I was standing as though he thought that even distance wouldn't be a deterrent if I made up my mind to swipe something from him.

Inside again, I was put to opening the letters and packages of all the boys on the line, and Mr. Reeves went through them examining their contents. He extracted cash and money orders to be put into the safe in Mr. Arnold's office, entered the amounts they represented in a large book and then re-copied

them on the envelopes so that the boy would know he had it to his credit and could draw for that sum in the commissary.

"Now you can clean up about here," he said, when the mail had been assorted, and I was instructed not to forget that the boys' mail went up to the classroom with me every night. "And then hang around somewhere within calling distance in case we have any errands for you to run."

55

I found riding the Gravy Train Special to be a life greatly to my liking; and, although it became pretty shaky at times because several of the monitors would like to have gotten some favourite of theirs on instead, a feat to be boasted about, and searched me for contraband coming and going, and several others things, I managed to hold it down without getting ditched until my release had been effected.

I led the new boys out of the office and introduced them behind the scenes, talking Greek when I used such terms as wolves, sweet-talkin', warmin' one up so's he kin work faster, and moanas' bench and moanas' whippin' night.

I summoned the old boys from fields and shops with magic white slips of paper; and watched them depart with institutional-inscribed eyes, that I knew would remain so until erased by the hand of death.

I didn't know that the number of lashes a boy received, and what he received them for, was con-

scientiously recorded in a book with black covers by Mr. Harrison, until I saw that book with my own eyes and wondered if it were the book the Preacher had referred to as the one God would consult when the Day of Judgment came, to see how we boys had been behaving in the School.

I sometimes joined in a game of croquet with Jo' and Frank and Paul Durney on the lawn; and I devoured book after book brought me from the Arnold library by Turnip Head, giving him, in return, smoking and chewing elicited from those visitors who were unable to read the cardboard signs printed on the walls, although they were so large and black they seemed to fairly scream out their injunctions.

Sunday was my busiest day. In the morning I scrubbed the narrow corridor and visiting room, dusted off the benches and table, and swept down the steps. Later I ushered the visitors in — almost all were very poor people — asked whom they wanted to see, and went out to get him. If it happened to be during services the boy invariably closed the classroom door with a deep sigh and the exhalation: "Phew," as if I were the one that'd

saved him. They sat on the benches at a loss for words, the boy munching on what had been brought. It wasn't in the spirit of adventure that he was doing time, and his disinclination to talk about the life led within cast misery over all.

56

One late summer afternoon, Turnip Head and I were taking a comfortable siesta in the dense shade of a maple-tree on the other side of the road, giving the jiggers for each other as we blew tobacco-smoke against the bark of the tree, when he caused me to swallow and make the smoke come through my nose and the tears into my eyes by making the casual remark:

" Sue A'nold ain't comin' back to teach this fall; she's gettin' married in town nex' week an' then leavin' for Atlanta."

This crafty, yellow-faced, ever-smiling Turnip Head knew all that was going on, and it exasperated me at times because it seemed as if he were running the Reformatory and regulating its life and affairs. He divided his time between the commissary and Mrs. Arnold's, and prying about the officers' quarters to see what he could see, hear, or steal. He knew all the scandal about the officers, monitors, and officers' wives; could tell you the menus a week

ahead of time; and when the moanas' were to be whipped. It was him that had started the interminable song about Dude Russell and Mrs. Randall; and he knew innumerable other ditties, all very dirty ones, that he could spin or sing by the hour. On the yard he always had a gathering of round faces and heads listening to him with ears pricked and eyes wide open in envy or admiration. And sometimes I used to look at his large head and wonder if it wouldn't rot because of the foul things revolving in it, like the turnips Uncle Bodleigh made us unearth from a mound behind the barn.

" An' Mr. A'nold's leavin' the sanitarium fo' the weddin'," he continued in his soft, mellow voice that filled my ears like a dirge. I had crumpled the cigarette and was lying back on the lawn, a dull ache in my heart, catching glimpses of the gray, floating clouds through the rustling branches overhead. "— An' then he's comin' back to git into harness an' start draggin' Refo'm School load uphill once mo'."

For several successive days I went through the routine like a moana that'd been numbed; and then was suddenly jolted out of it by an incident that made the hair stand straight up on my head.

Mr. Reeves had sent me to the tailor shop to find out whether they had the bill for a roll of cloth that'd been delivered; and I was on my way back with it, just passing Thumbsucker's station, when mingled cries and whistles from the direction of the barnyard caused me to stop and look around and rooted me to the spot: a yard or so distant, blindly rushing this way, was a great big black hog with its throat slit from ear to ear. Men with knives from whom it had bolted were in pursuit. It was shaking its gory head, sinking to its knees, rising again and staggering on, sinking and staggering on, like a football player with his head down. It sprawled across the walk an inch away from me, splashing warm large drops of blood on it and on my bare feet, then tumbled over and rose, and fell

and rose again. I never felt so horrified in all my life. The men trampled by, with their short shouts and knives, to finish the work they'd so unskillfully begun; and I turned and fled down the walk toward the bathroom hollering: " Going by! " And wishing that I had the courage of a Lloyd Rollins to keep straight on going until I'd plunged into the swift, smooth River.

" It was just like attending a funeral," I heard Mr. Arnold telling Mr. Reeves the morning after the wedding, as I sat outside in the Visitors' Room, staring blankly at an open book. " Sue is as good as lost to us now."

Mr. Reeves said something in a low voice that I couldn't catch, and Mr. Arnold who was rummaging noisily through some papers as he stood in the doorway of his office continued talking. . . . I listened with my cheeks on fire and learned that she'd married a young man from Atlanta, much taller than herself, who had come up on business for his firm, and whom she'd met through common friends. They had fallen in love with each other at first sight, and were now off on a brief honeymoon, ending up in Atlanta, where Sue was to make her home.

" And God only knows how long it'll be before we see her again."

He had aged considerably since I first saw him,

lantern in hand, going over my commitment that night. His face was colourless and the fine lines of suffering in it seemed to have spread and coursed down from the furrows in his forehead. The bald patch on the crown of his head had grown much larger, the little quivering bags under his eyes heavier, and his body, with its round belly, thinner. On his short nose he now wore thick glasses as though he was trying to conceal the life-wearied expression that had crept into his kind blue eyes; and the papers in his hand trembled and trembled as though affected by the change in him.

"Yes, Mr. Reeves," he repeated, turning and walking into his office, his voice trailing behind, as if he was addressing himself and not Mr. Reeves. "It was just the same as going to a funeral."

And six days later little Josie died.

59

I cannot remember who it was that first brought the word, nor that any one of us knew it before the other, but it seems that not until a white hearse appeared in the yard between the kitchen and schoolroom steps that morning, as though it had been lowered from heaven overnight, and we were assembled in the classroom after dinner in our Sunday clothes, the day having been declared hers, and had listened to the preacher say a few words, and been stirred so by Mr. Crane singing, solo, in his rich, powerful voice the beautiful song he always requested his wife to play, " Jesus wants me for a sunbeam," that several of us couldn't keep our tears back; and then risen row by row, the big boys first, and stepped across the Arnolds' threshold through the open door, and passed around the little coffin that'd been set on a table a few feet from it, and witnessed her lying inside, dressed in white and looking so funny with her cheeks puffed up that it seemed as though she were pouting and

trying hard to pop open her great, dark blue eyes and dispel all the gloom, and then taken our seats again, and a little later turned in them, as though by common assent, to watch four tall men, Mr. Harrison, Mr. Crane, and two whom we didn't know, carrying the white casket on their shoulders out through the little classroom, her family in black and a number of others behind, and heard machines start up and leave, and marched out to change our clothes and stand in disconsolate groups on the yard, and returned to the schoolroom after supper and sat in silence and misery with a sudden, furtive, occasional glance at the door she used to come through, until we heard the melancholy peal of the bell in the yard floating in the air over the whole Reformatory as though it were enveloping it in a train of crêpe, were we conscious through and through that our little friend and playmate was really to be among us no more.

It was a chill that got her, we learned, and that developed into the flu and pneumonia and took her away in a few hours.

60

I left Mr. Arnold in the Reformatory a broken-hearted man. He did not survive Jo's death a month. I often passed through his office and saw him sitting at his desk with his haggard head buried in his arms in a bitter access of weeping. Sometimes he even blamed himself before God for being the cause of her death, and once when Mr. Reeves was out of the office he shook his hands over his head and cried in the same manner as when first I arrived:

"This all would have been averted if I'd had the strength to resign when first I saw how their souls were being warped — or set those that came in after me free!"

61

I didn't get a chance to offer Ned my hand and bid him good-bye upon the day of my release as I did most of the others who worked around the administrative buildings. He'd lost his gravy train for getting caught with a sack of smoking that Thumbsucker saw a First Division boy giving him in his headquarters, and both'd been put on the moanas' bench and faced the blackboard now, side by side, the only ones on it, all the rest having been taken off the day of Josie's death. It had made no impression on Ned, leaving him cold and indifferent. He'd long since been giving himself to monitors and others with reckless abandonment. His life had been poisoned.

62

The woman who had been so good to me was waiting in a machine out in front. I could see her beaming countenance through the pane as I started down the steps, escorted by Mr. Harrison. A chauffeur opened the door.

"Well, my dear boy," she greeted me in her rich, full voice, and nodded at Mr. Harrison. "We're going to begin all over again. Aren't we?"

"Yes ma'm!" Mr. Harrison spoke up for me as he had when I was being whipped by Mr. Leach. "His slate's wiped clean as far as we're concerned. There's a clear road 'head o' him now, and we're bettin' on him makin' good time on it, too."

I certainly did. It was a one-way road and it led to Penitentiary Avenue.